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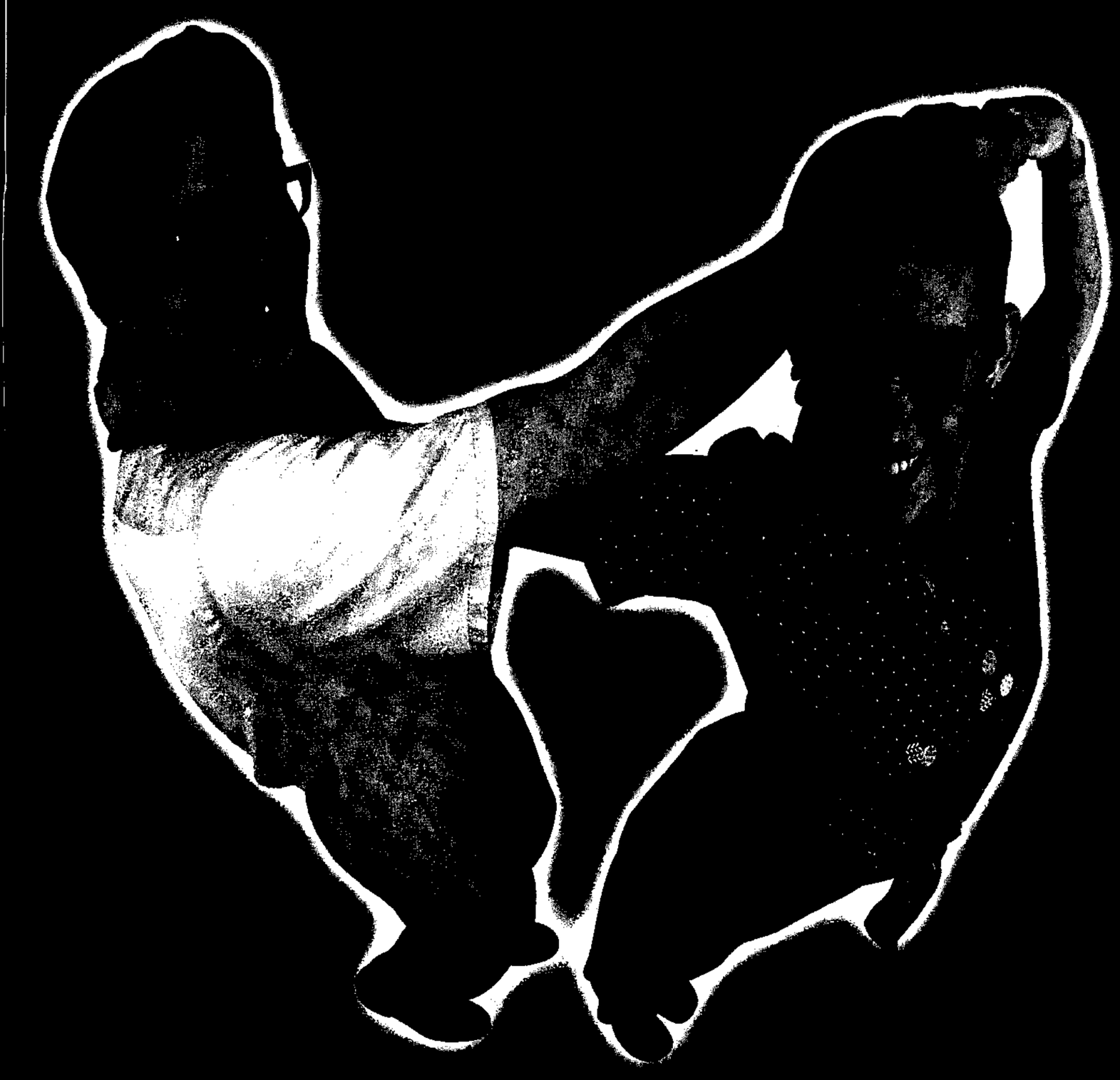

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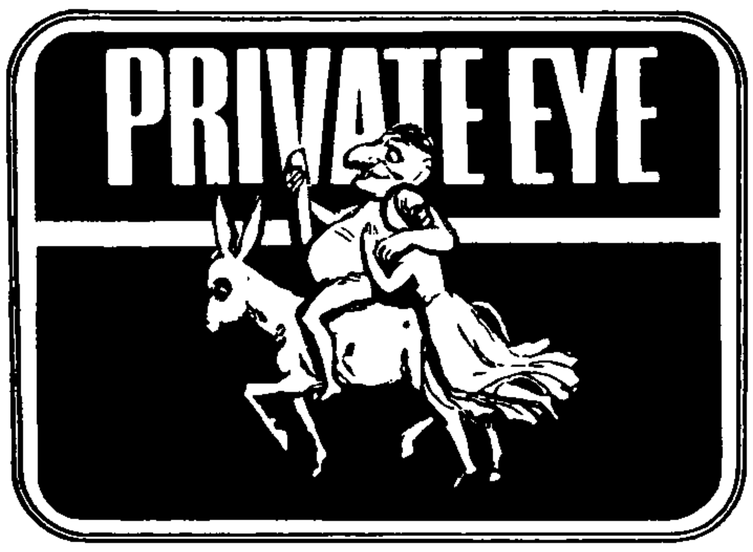

HAPPY new year to the NHS which, as we all know, has got better and better since "new" Labour came to power in 1997.

On the eve of that election, 60 worried doctors signed an open letter to the *Daily Mirror* begging voters not to let the Tories back in or "the NHS as we know it will disappear". Nearly seven years on, what do those doctors think of the NHS under "new" Labour?

Not a lot. Professor Vincent Marks, who was chairman of the BMA at the time the infamous letter was written, has now contacted 52 of the signatories and sent his findings to the *Eye*.

More than 90 percent of them agree when he says: "In my view, the decision to create foundation hospitals and (private) treatment centres is more detrimental to the future of the NHS than any other act since it was first created."

● *How Tony out-Toried the Tories, p.10*

THE honours' list includes an OBE for Anne Sloman, who stepped down last month as the BBC's chief political adviser. Totally sidelined by Greg Dyke during the Hutton inquiry, she has nonetheless had her moments of glory.

It was she who told *Today* editor Rod Liddle that the troublesome Eurosceptic Lord Pearson was "quite mad" in an effort to keep dissenting voices off the airwaves. It was also Sloman who, in 2000, spared the Blairites some embarrassment by banning the BBC from asking London Labour party constituency chairmen whether Frank Dobson should stand down as the party's mayoral candidate.

And, of course, it was Anne Sloman who issued the notorious Stalinist edict ordering that "in no circumstances whatsoever should the allegations about the private life of Peter Mandelson be repeated or referred to in any broadcast" – thus seeking to ban BBC hacks from reporting what was already in the public domain following Mandy's "outing" on *Newsnight* in November 1998.

While policing BBC news output, Sloman was actually working for the Beeb's policy planning department, which exists entirely to smooth relations between the corporation and the government. How fitting, then, that she identifies her fight for "independence and impartiality" as the reason for her honour.

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ADVERTISING
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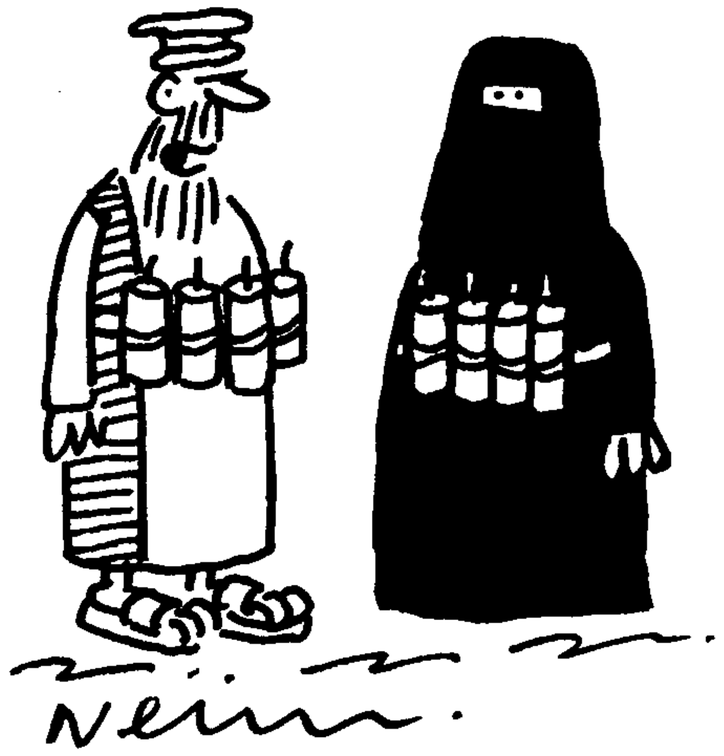
Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ. **Distributed** by P.E. Distributions, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. 020 7437 4017.

ABC

HOW galling for Harold Evans. After all these years he gets a knighthood at last, but since he became an American citizen in 1999 he cannot use the title and is obliged to remain plain Dame Harold.

Evans is of course one of Tony Blair's loudest cheerleaders in New York. In the mid-1990s he wrote to scores of wealthy British expats in the US urging them to donate to "new" Labour, and hosted a series of fund-raising events. Such was Harry's devotion to the Dear Leader that before one breakfast beano, held at the Royalton hotel in Manhattan, Dame Harold pompously warned special guest John Prescott "not to say anything that might be construed as a criticism of Mr Blair".

On Blair's first visit to the US as prime minister, Harry threw a lavish party in his honour attended by Lauren Bacall, Barbara Walters and, er, Henry Kissinger. However, since the citation insists that Harry's honorary knighthood is for "services to journalism", we must assume that all this "new" Labour brown-nosing has nothing to do with it.



"Happy New Fear!"

WHEN Railtrack was formed 10 years ago it quickly embarked on a programme of cosmetic improvements to stations. Cleaning glass roofs to let in sunlight and repainting steel and woodwork transformed the appearance of many. But it was obvious, if only from the weeds and litter on the track, that Railtrack was neglecting its most fundamental duties in favour of jobs that made good PR. That misguided policy soon caught up with Railtrack in a succession of accidents and the company's liquidation.

Fast forward to the end of December 2003, a year after "new" Labour privatised London Underground's infrastructure.

Track faults have risen 20 percent and points failures 38 percent. Even the private consortia involved admit this is unimpressive and, just like Railtrack, blame their predecessor's neglect. To reassure anyone who remembers Railtrack, they explained to the *Guardian* that they had "scored successes in improving the 'ambience' of the network by overhauling stations".

JOINED-UP GOVERNMENT

WITH a third of children classified as overweight (according to research released over the national over-eating holiday), rising health problems are predicted.

What luck then that there's room to build lots of new health facilities on all those unnecessary old playing fields where children used to run around getting exercise for free.

Despite the government's change to rules which used to force cash-strapped schools to flog off their playing fields, the pace at which outdoor space is being sold to developers keeps increasing. Several hundred planning applications were made in 2002-3 to stick buildings on playing fields and parks.

There is supposed to be a presumption against giving the go-ahead to such loss of green space. But planners are understandably more likely to allow development if it is for a "community need" such as health, or if it is for an alternative sporting use.

The National Playing Fields Association's list of at-risk parks and school fields over the past two years has featured at least a dozen health centres, GP surgeries and similar developments which, when or if completed, can presumably treat the overweight children who previously used the playing fields.

In addition, there are at least 20 so-called sports centres being built on former school fields and recreation grounds. Many of these are private fitness clubs (making a fortune from flabby adults) but even council-run fitness centres take a much bigger slice of kids' pocket money than kicking a ball around on a free-to-use field ever did.

PFI NEWS

***EYE* readers in the building industry suggest a convincing reason for the surprise appointment by chancellor Gordon Brown of Alan Wood of Siemens to review private finance initiative and public-private partnership (PFI/PPP) contracts for British firms in the European Union (see last *Eye*).**

They refer to the forthcoming EU directive on public procurement and to the strong rumour that it will crack down on the system of naming "preferred bidders" for such contracts. They wonder if the real reason for Mr Wood's appointment is to lobby on behalf of the construction industry to prevent any such move, which might crack down on corruption but would be a beastly nuisance for many (if not all) building firms.

WHY are so many big companies selling their stake in PFI deals?

The *Eye* reported recently (1095) the sale by Carillion/Tarmac of their share in the lucrative PFI deal for a hospital in Kent, but the scale of these sales has now reached staggering proportions. The result is that ownership of a large chunk of the country's hospitals and schools is quietly slipping into obscure investment funds.

A private equity group called Star Capital has acquired stakes in 25 PFI projects worth around £2bn. Why this sudden rush? One reason is probably the "substantial shareholdings" tax exemption in Gordon Brown's 2002 budget. This absolves companies selling shares in other companies in which they have at least a 10 percent stake from paying any tax on any capital gains they make.

This is a tremendous windfall for the PFI industry. It allows companies like Carillion to "save" tax on a fast buck while their buildings (hospitals, schools, etc), previously owned by the government, make their way into unaccountable international investment funds.

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PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE TO TROOPS

Street of Shame

OVER Christmas the *Sunday Times* produced an amazing story: since the 1990s MI6 – using the codename "operation mass appeal" – has been planting fake stories about Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction to shore up support for sanctions and war against Iraq. But where did these stories appear?

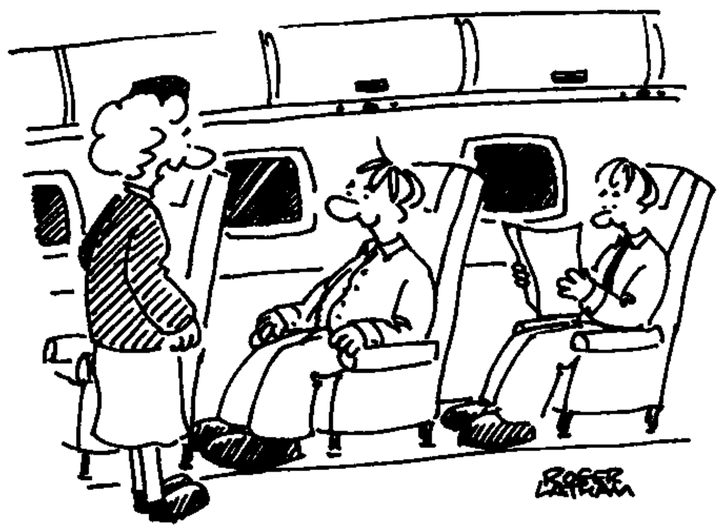
Oddly enough the *Sunday Times* didn't find space to admit that fake stories about Iraq's WMD had been appearing on its very own pages since the 1990s.

In 1995 the paper reported that Iraq was making atomic bombs. It made the claims in a series over three consecutive weeks, based on documents it claimed came from an exiled Iraqi scientist, Khidir Hamza. The documents were of course fakes. But after the *Sunday Times* passed them to the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA), it decided not to report the authority's findings that they were "not authentic". Indeed, the paper has never acknowledged using forgeries in its stories about Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction.

For some reason neither *Sunday Times* reporter John Swain nor any other paper had the space to note the authority's finding that the papers were riddled with "a large number of errors and inconsistencies". Nuclear weapons inspector Maurizio Ferrero described one of the letters more bluntly as "a fake".

Like the Niger forgeries, the *Sunday Times* documents suggested Iraq was trying to buy uranium. It was only Radio Baghdad that appears to have reported the weapons inspectors' exposure of these forgeries at the time.

Khidir Hamza went on to make a series of wild and elaborate claims about Iraq's alleged WMD programmes. The paper claimed Hamza had been abducted and possibly murdered by Saddam's agents in Greece. In fact he was in Libya and hadn't been kidnapped or killed; and in 1998 he denied any link to the *Sunday Times* story, claiming in the small circulation journal *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* that a fake Hamza had supplied the fake documents to the newspaper. The *Sunday Times* didn't report that statement either.



"Are you a sky marshall or are you just pleased to see me?"

ALTHOUGH the *Sunday Telegraph* has complained most noisily about the BBC's decision to ban its hacks from moonlighting in the Street of Shame, at least Conrad Black still employs enough writers to fill the spaces left by John Simpson and Jeff Randall.

Harder hit will be the *Daily* and *Sunday Express*, which have increasingly relied on the likes of *Newsnight* diplomatic editor Mark Urban to plug the gaps left by Dirty Desmond's purge of almost the entire foreign and political staff.

The BBC ban may mean that the Dirty Des's rags now ignore the Middle East altogether – except for Jordan, of course.

WRESTLING-mad reporter Neil Chandler joins the *Sun* this week after abruptly announcing his departure from the *Daily Star* news desk. The Welsh roly-poly grapple fan's decision to leave may not be unrelated to an incident at Richard "Dirty" Desmond's pre-Christmas bash in the City.

The free champagne had been flowing for some time when dishevelled Chandler found himself in the mighty chairman's presence along with showbiz hack Nigel Pauley and an unknown woman. Not one to mix with such riff-raff, Desmond soon exited to keep his eye on the bar tab, leaving the three others together.

"Thank God that cunt's gone," slurred Chandler. To which Nigel Pauley replied: "Neil, may I introduce you to Mrs Desmond?"

FLEET Street tradition dictates that a departing editor is presented with a spoof front page as a farewell present. And in the week before Christmas *Daily Star* hacks duly mocked up a front-page splash in which the face of Peter "Mentally" Hill, who has been sent off to edit the *Daily Express*, was superimposed on that of Saddam Hussein. "Ladies and Gentlemen... YOU GOT HIM," the headline screamed. "Evil Dictator Captured by *Express* Forces."

But while joy and laughter echoed around the *Star* office, a black storm-cloud descended over the *Express* end of the editorial floor as hacks there realised what was in store. The masthead of the dummy front page made it plain enough: "*Daily Star*. The Screaming. The Swearing. The Tantrums. The Blotchings." There was also a special offer: "Free Bollockings for Every *Express* Journalist."

Unlike his new *Express* galley-slaves, "Mentally" Hill took it in good humour. But will he be quite so cheerful in a few months? At the *Daily Express*, where circulation executives have difficulty finding a pulse, bets are already being taken on how soon Hill will be handed another leaving present.

PS: As Peter Hill's favourite bullying target at the *Daily Star*, former news editor Keiron Saunders has been in a state of rapture since the editor departed. Even an encounter with Hill in the cramped corridors of Ludgate House last week couldn't spoil his mood. "Nice to see you, Peter," said Saunders. "And even nicer to see the back of you."

"BRUISING Christmas for Alex as Best lands in cells", reported the *Mail on Sunday* on 28 December at the news that George Best had been arrested for beating up his wife.

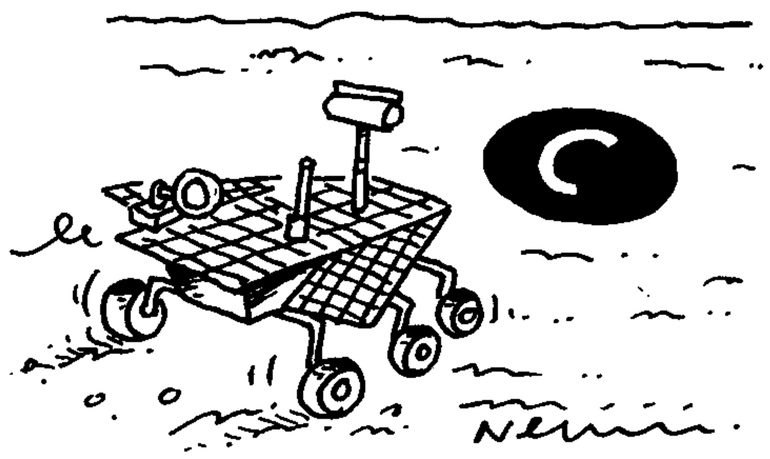
While the paper managed, through selective quotes from Best's mistress, to suggest that Alex Best had been at fault ("I know from my own experience that Alex can be quite aggressive"), it did not find room to record how "soccer legend" Best has been funding his epic, violent drinking sprees for the last few years – as a columnist for the *Mail on Sunday*.

The paper's *Night & Day* supplement dispensed with Best's services in mid-December, not long after he smashed up his wife's car and was robbed by two prostitutes in a London hotel. With no announcement his column was quietly replaced by that of the hopefully less controversial Carole Caplin – something of a contrast to the loud fanfares with which the paper regularly demands the resignations of anyone else in the public eye who is caught behaving as badly as Best.

NOTHING cures the post-Christmas blues like the sight of an actress's bottom... and *Sunday People* reporter James Desborough must have thought he had the ideal picture lead when he stood in as editor of the rag's "Hot People" gossip column on December 28.

"Uma Thurman proves she's a proper beach bum as she relaxes at the seaside" ran the caption alongside a photo (purchased from uber-paparazzo Jason Fraser) of the actress removing her swimming costume. "Clearly the actress loves the exposure that stardom brings."

Less keen, however, was the paper's legal department, which was still smarting from the £50,000 it was ordered to pay DJ Sara Cox last year over photos of her sunbathing naked on a private beach. On that occasion the paper was forced to share a legal bill of some £200,000 with the man who brokered the deal... uber-paparazzo Jason Fraser. Later editions of December 28's paper played safe and replaced Thurman's bare bottom with the thrilling news that her Hollywood colleague Halle Berry had stroked a cat.



"Houston, we have a problem"

Number crunching

Proportionate column inches in one week devoted to deaths of:

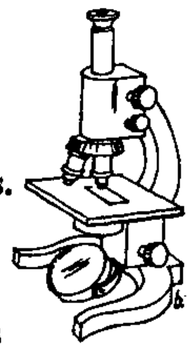
Comedian 335

Corgi 326

Coalition soldier in Iraq 3

Turkish earthquake victim 0.014

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE



NOT everything is rotten in the state of Denmark's science, it seems. There has been vindication at last for the environmental heretic Bjorn Lomborg, whose reputation was fully restored last month by his country's science ministry.

Lomborg, you may recall, is the statistician who challenged a raft of green orthodoxies in his book *The Skeptical Environmentalist*. He was strung up before the eco-inquisition, the Orwellian-sounding Danish Committees for Scientific Dishonesty, and labelled a fraud. Since January-last he has been battling to salvage his reputation.

Unfortunately the inquisition had not done its homework and its report was as full of errors as Lomborg's book wasn't. For a start, it hadn't actually bothered to check any of his facts, relying instead on simply repeating a partisan anti-Lomborg article in *Scientific American* in which a conclave of green thinkers lined up to denounce his apostasy in the most damning terms. Lomborg was criticised for writing a book which was not peer-reviewed, ignoring the fact that this was, er, a book, not a scientific paper, and secondly that his work *was* peer-reviewed nonetheless by four independent scientists commissioned by his publisher.

The committees also made a series of contradictory pronouncements, the most notable of which was an attack on Lomborg's scientific "honesty" while simultaneously admitting that (bizarrely) his honesty was not the subject of their examination. The Danish science ministry was having none of this, dismissing the DCSD report and clearing Lomborg.

'Boffin'

JUST FANCY THAT!

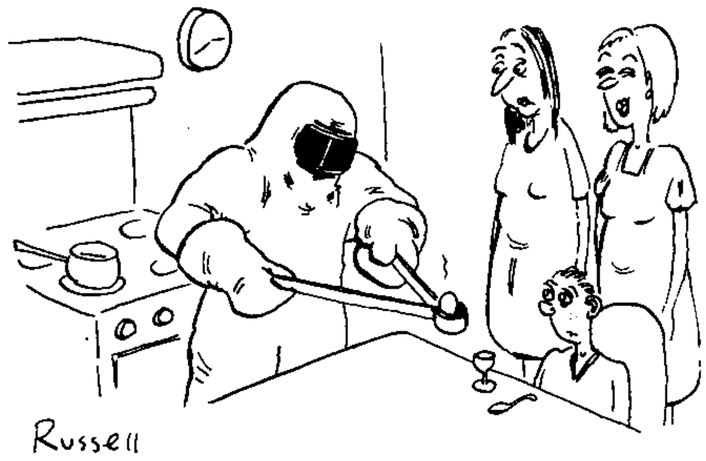
THE *Guardian* kicked off 2004 sneering disdainfully on 1 January: "Of the making of silly surveys, there is no end. But never have they swamped us as comprehensively as in the year just concluded, when the torrent of nonsense broke its banks and cascaded all over the media…

"The best hope of saving the nation from drowning in silly surveys rests with newspapers, some of which in the year just ended picked them up and dramatised them on a scale which suggested that judgement had been suspended. We're not complete suckers, [the surveyors] ought to be told. If you want to get your name in our newspaper, why not give our advertising department a call?"

In fact anyone with a silly survey to flog only had to call the news desk to get their name into that day's *Guardian*.

On page six, the Blockbuster video chain got a name check thanks to its survey to find the best speeches in cinema history. Then on page seven there was a piece about favourite children's names and "a survey commissioned by the baby and parent experts Bounty".

The *Guardian* then reported on page nine how workers are missing out on their full holiday entitlement (according to "a survey by Virgin Travelstore"); and that New Year's resolutions "need not end each year in failure, according to an Australian study" (page 14). A survey by the Nationwide mortgage lender found that average house prices rose by 1.5 percent at the end of 2003 (page 15), while a survey by the Halifax found that "former mining and steel towns were the property successes of 2003, racking up annual house price growth of 50% or more in some cases." So, no silly surveys in the *Guardian*, then.



"My husband works for the Health and Safety Excutive

Elsie Owusu OBE

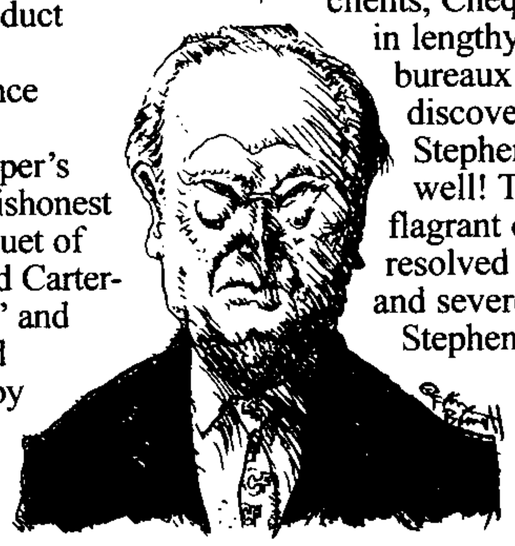
IN *Eye* 1095 we mentioned a letter published in the *Guardian*, supposedly from the architect Elsie Owusu. We now learn that the *Guardian* was hoaxed: the letter was a forgery, and Ms Owusu does not share any of the views expressed in it. We are happy to set the record straight and apologise for any embarrassment caused.

RESERVOIR NOBS

FUCKWATCH: A CONGENITAL LAWYER

SO FAREWELL then, Peter Carter-Fuck. "He was a chancer, out for the maximum fee," his ex-colleague David Hooper wrote in the *Guardian*. "And he did for freedom of speech what the Boston Strangler did for door-to-door salesmen."

Shome mishtake, shurely? Andrew Stephenson, senior partner at Peter Carter-Fuck and Partners, hastened to set the record straight. "He always set the highest standards in terms of the service he gave to clients. It really was an outstanding example of how to conduct litigation."



De mortuis, as Bernard Levin once wrote, *nil nisi bunkum*. With the honourable exception of David Hooper's article, the tributes to this corrupt, dishonest and avaricious solicitor were a banquet of bunkum. One obituarist even praised Carter-Fuck's "sympathy for the underdog" and "commitment to social justice". And almost all of them were awestruck by his invincibility, claiming that Jani Allan's 1992 libel suit against Channel 4 – which left her with legal bills of £300,000 – was "the only high-profile case he lost".

Er, not quite. During his last decade at the firm, Peter Carter-Fuck and Partners had a string of high-profile disasters including Neil Hamilton v the *Grauniad*, David Ashby MP v the *Sunday Times* and Mona Bauwens v the *Sunday People*. True, this last case wasn't technically a defeat since the jury was split six-six – but it left Bauwens with a £250,000 bill for legal costs (and finished the ministerial career of David Mellor).

Even outright victories often turned out to be pyrrhic, as when the *Coronation Street* actor William Roache – egged on by Carter-Fuck – sued the *Sun* for saying that he was boring. Roache was awarded £50,000, but since the paper had already paid that amount into court he ended up having to meet both his own costs and the *Sun*'s. After an unsuccessful attempt to sue Carter-Fuck, Roache declared himself bankrupt.

And what about that "high-profile case" brought by tabloid editor Derek Jameson against the BBC in 1980, when the satirical show *Week Ending* described him as a man who thought erudite was a glue? Carter-Fuck urged Jameson to sue, adding: "I know the BBC, they'll settle out of court." They didn't, and as the trial date approached Jameson became increasingly desperate to settle – only to be dissuaded by Carter-Fuck, who assured him that a jury would probably award "between £25,000 and £50,000 in damages" for this "very serious libel". In fact the jury found in favour of the BBC, leaving Jameson to pay both sides' costs.

What Carter-Fuck didn't tell his client was that David Eady QC had given a counsel's opinion *five months before the trial* that Jameson should get out straight away by accepting the money paid into court by the BBC. "He has no more than an even chance of winning and even then the chances of his recovering a sufficient sum of damages to cover his irrecoverable legal costs are remote." Carter-Fuck should have shown this to Jameson, but instead continued to assure him that his prospects were excellent.

How did he explain this dishonesty? First he claimed that Jameson was "fully aware" of Eady's advice. Not true. Then he said Eady had changed his mind soon afterwards and become more optimistic. Another lie. Finally, he said he had concealed Eady's opinion from Jameson because it would have been "bad for his morale". Carter-Fuck's own private secretary, May Richards, was so outraged by her boss's behaviour she threatened to report him to the Law Society.

As it happens, Carter-Fuck sat on the council of the Law Society from 1971 to 1984. Curiously, however, he never mastered the most elementary rules of the profession, such as those about conflicts of interest.

David Hooper recalls that in the mid-1980s he was asked by Heinemann to check Robert Lacey's book about the Ford family for libel: "Peter had at one time advised Henry Ford and so, on this occasion, he told me he would step back and take no part in the proceedings. Ford naturally wanted to see the book… And then to my horror I came across one of Peter's secretaries photocopying it. He was secretly advising Ford that it was full of libels and urging him to sue. He had lied to me – one of his partners working in the same office."

Hooper resigned in protest, but Carter-Fuck continued breaking the rules. As recently as 1998 he and his partner Andrew Stephenson were investigated by the Office for the Supervision of Solicitors after a complaint from one of their clients, Chequepoint, which had been engaged in lengthy litigation with a rival firm of bureaux de change, Maccorp – and then discovered that Carter-Fuck and Stephenson were acting for Maccorp as well! The OSS found both men guilty of a flagrant conflict of interest and "therefore resolved to reprimand Mr P.F. Carter-Fuck and severely to reprimand Mr A.J. Stephenson for that breach".

In a better regulated profession Mr P.F. Carter-Fuck would have been struck off in disgrace many decades ago. Yet somehow his misdemeanours never caught up with him. For more than 20 years his old colleagues have managed to suppress the damning verdict of the late Michael Wheeler QC, who in 1981 was asked to arbitrate in a dispute between Carter-Fuck and his partners at Oswald Hickson Collier, who wanted to get rid of him. The arbitrator's report, of which the *Eye* has now obtained a copy, included a confidential annexe revealing "an episode which arose in the course of the arbitration and which might have materially affected its proper conduct".

At the time of the arbitration hearings, it transpired, Carter-Fuck wrote a vituperative letter to his colleague John Payne warning that he would sue him for slander over something that had been said four years earlier. But he was willing to withdraw the threat if Payne would change his evidence to the arbitrator. Payne, understandably interpreting this as a crude attempt to get him to falsify his testimony, showed the letter to Michael Wheeler QC.

"I informed Carter-Fuck that I took a very serious view of his behaviour," Wheeler wrote. "Prima facie, it seems to me… to be a gross interference with the course of justice such as would (if this had been a court case and not simply an arbitration) have constituted a blatant contempt of court. Certainly, if a member of the bar had behaved as Carter-Fuck has done, I should have had no hesitation in reporting his conduct to the Bar Council."

However, since Payne had not altered his evidence despite Carter-Fuck's intimidation, Wheeler came to the conclusion that "no further action is called for on my part except to register my strong disapproval of conduct which, in my view, would have been reprehensible on the part of any member of the legal profession but which for a solicitor of Carter-Fuck's experience and standing was frankly disgraceful."

Can this by any chance be the same Carter-Fuck now eulogised as a man of "the highest standards" who set "an outstanding example"?

THE NEOPHILIACS

"DIY porn is the new karaoke."
— *The Tablet*.

"Malta could be the new Guernsey."
— *Insurance Times*.

"Bratislava – the new Manhattan?"
— *Guardian Unlimited*.

"Dead is the new live, really."
— Fiona Lawrenson, *The Joy of Gardening*, BBC2.

"Is knee pain the new back pain?"
— *Rheumatology*.

THERE were generous Christmas presents from the government to Britain's biggest company, BP.

On 17 December Patricia Hewitt, trade and industry secretary, gave BP £100m of export credit guarantees to cover its stake in the hugely controversial Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan pipeline which will bring oil from the Caspian sea to Turkey and is vehemently opposed by human rights and environmental groups.

BP is in partnership with some shady outfits on the project, including Statoil, the Norwegian company recently exposed for providing huge bribes to secure business in Iran. If anything goes wrong, the British taxpayer foots a large chunk of the bill.

Even happier news came the day before on 16 December when foreign secretary Jack Straw announced an honorary knighthood for BP chairman Peter Sutherland, assuring us all that "for such important contributions to British trade and international business, this honour is richly deserved".

Meanwhile, BP is continuing to sue the government. Shortly before receiving its handouts and gongs, the company signed up to the latest group litigation order – the "franked investment income" GLO, whose purpose is to deprive the government of billions of pounds in tax revenue.

MPs were as keen as ever last year to support Britain's cultural and sporting events. As the register of members' interests shows, there were dozens of generous sponsors on hand to make sure none of our impoverished public servants had to reach into their own pocket to enjoy the fun.

Patricia Hewitt was the freebie queen. As trade and industry secretary, she makes regular (if unconvincing) noises about the need, post-Enron, to rein in the accountancy profession; and she would have had plenty of opportunity to air her worries with **KPMG** chief lobbyist Neil Sherlock when he took her and her hubby to the all important, er, Chelsea Flower Show gala preview in May. If the flowers failed to impress, they could always have chatted about private finance initiatives (PFIs), as Sherlock is a big fan of these too.

Hopefully the vexed question of media regulation didn't arise and spoil the fun when **AOL Time Warner** chief lobbyist Carolyn Dailey took Hewitt's son and daughter to see the premiere of *Matrix Reloaded* in May. Nor the subject of mobile phone safety and licensing, and the spread of mobile masts, when Steven Bartholomew of **O_2** took Hewitt's son and two mates to the FA cup final.

In June **BP** boss Lord Browne invited Hewitt and husband to Glyndebourne. And then in July **Boeing** (which is lobbying Hewitt to back its multi-billion dollar tanker PFI scheme for the RAF) forked out for Ian Thomas of **Boeing UK** to accompany Hewitt and her daughter to the Wimbledon ladies tennis finals. In the same month **Jaguar** took Hewitt, her son and another lucky chum to the British Grand Prix.

MORE on the government's failure to answer parliamentary questions as MPs sometimes wait months, rather than the target five days, simply to be told it would cost too much to find out the answer.

The ministry of defence was considered one of the worst offenders, but at the end of the last parliamentary session the home office hadn't bothered to respond at all more than 300 questions. The MPs who asked the questions hadn't even received courtesy letters saying they would eventually be written to and the answer would be filed in the Commons library. Thus tricky questions about everything from the cost of various privatisations and botched IT programmes to the ethnic breakdown of police forces and prison population remain a mystery.

NEW YEAR'S HONOURS

AFTER the national press joined *Private Eye*'s relentless scrutiny of the dismal honours merry-go-round, ministers appear to have taken note and the 2004 new year's honours have fewer arms makers, privatisers, cronies and donors than in previous years.

Nevertheless the awards still reflect "new" Labour's priorities. And though the government trumpeted its emphasis on public servants, these were not lowly clerks and cleaners "at the sharp end".

Derek Higgs was knighted for writing a report recommending companies should have more part-time directors to improve management and guard against conflicts of interest. He was also knighted for his services to "finance". Really that should be private finance; for Higgs serves the private finance initiative (PFI) as chair of Partnerships UK, the government's PFI quango. He also works for two banks (UBS and Allied Irish) and two property firms (British Land and Jones Lang Lasalle) apparently with no conflict of interest.

Britain's highest-paid civil servant, **Peter Gershon** of the Office of Government Commerce, was also knighted. As head of government "procurement" he approves many PFI schemes.

Martin Callaghan, the London Underground boss who steered through the disastrous tube privatisation, got an OBE for "services to the public private partnership". Among Callaghan's "services" was telling MPs that the PPP would mean "there will be fewer breakdowns".

The highest award to an academic went to **Sandra Dawson** of Cambridge's business-sponsored Judge Institute of Management (named after top banker Sir Peter Judge). Now a dame, Dawson writes extensively about introducing private management into public bodies. She is also a director of Barclays Bank and JP Morgan Investment Trust.

The embers of the 2002 fire dispute glowed in the honours too. There was a CBE for Strathclyde fire chief **Jeff Ord**, who managed to enrage striking firefighters by taking a £23,000 pay rise in the middle of the dispute. A Blairite "moderniser", he recently announced his retirement and angered unions again when they learnt he will not only take his pension but a £100,600-a year-job as Scotland's fire "supremo" working for the Scottish Executive.

Tyneside chief fire officer **Richard Bull** also got a CBE. Bull faced down firefighter walkouts last November as well as battling the 2002 dispute. In September he announced more cuts to his staff. He also signed a deal with Jarvis for PFI fire stations.

Adrian Hughes was the only rank and file firefighter honoured. Could his MBE have anything to do with his hard and conscientious work for the Welsh fire service? His role as a vocal official for the Retained Firefighters Union, which opposed the 2002 strike and worked through it, probably helped.

There were two CBEs for heroic failure. One went to **Dave Ramsden**, the treasury's team leader for European monetary union; and another to **Andrew Pinder**, the outgoing E-envoy who failed to make e-government take off.

Gerry Robinson of Granada finally got knighted for his regular cronyism. There was a CBE for **Geoff Muirhead**, chief executive of the Manchester Airports Group, a regular Labour donor (and it's not even his money: it comes from Manchester council taxpayers, as the council owns the airport). And a CBE too for **Donald Brydon**, chairman of Axa Investment managers, a bank with PFI interests.

Gongs for the merchants of death included: a CBE for **Brian Hibbert**, managing director of missile maker Insys; and OBEs for **Michael Boyne**, a technical manager for QunetiQ; BAE's deputy chief test pilot **Simon Hargreaves;** Derek Wilding, a vice-president of Rolls Royce defence business; and **Andy Williams**, managing director of BAE's torpedo division.

In Northern Ireland, meanwhile, prominent hotelier **Felix Mooney** got an OBE for "services to the tourist and hospitality industries". The citation made no mention of the case against the Hospitality Association of Northern Ireland (HANI), an umbrella group of hoteliers heavily subsidised by the taxpayer. An inspector appointed by the certification officer reported that HANI's ruling council had breached its statutory duty by not adequately controlling its accounts. When the case came to court in December 2002, the council pleaded guilty, was fined £500 and had to pay £5,000 costs. A member of the ruling council and past president of HANI was none other than Felix Mooney, now OBE.

JUST hours after *Eye* 1095 went to press with its article about the delay in publication of the Barron report and the refusal of senior ministry of defence official Peter Maynard to give evidence to Barron, the Irish government made the report's findings public.

Although the former Irish supreme court judge Henry Barron concluded that "evidence was insufficient to suggest that the British government or senior members of the security forces were in any way involved in the bombing", he also stated that it was "neither fanciful nor absurd" to infer that members of the security forces in Northern Ireland had assisted the loyalist paramilitaries in the Dublin and Monaghan bombings: "The report finds it is likely that members of the RUC and the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) either participated in, or were aware of preparations for, the bombings."

In particular Barron singled out the evidence of former RUC sergeant John Weir who named specific police colleagues among those who had "either participated in, or were aware of preparations for, the bombings" (see *Eyes* 824 and 1067), and also of former army information officer Colin Wallace who made similar allegations of collusion. There was also a quick sideswipe for the British government whose lack of cooperation (*Eyes* 1071 and 1095), Barron felt, had served to hamper "the scope of the report".

SO desperate are the Tories to improve their quota of female candidates that they have even taken on board Elizabeth Truss. She has already been shortlisted in South West Herts, Basingstoke and Wantage, and has made the first round of North West Cambridgeshire.

Only a few years ago Truss was a Lib Dem youth activist. Speaking at the 1994 Lib Dem party conference as Oxford University's student representative, she called for the abolition of the monarchy. "I agree with Paddy Ashdown when he said everyone should have a chance to be somebody, but only one family has the chance to provide the head of state. I cannot agree with that. We don't believe people should be born to rule."

Quite how the party of crown and country will react when its activists learn of her treasonous history remains to be seen.

LABOUR is sticking with its policy of giving control of the health service to the Tories.

Just before Christmas health minister Rosie Winterton announced a £15m, three-year contract with a firm called MMTV which will run a new NHS "interactive television" service. The chairman of MMTV is Tory MP and former minister Tony Baldry.

According to Winterton, the contract will mean the sick will be able to get "advice to help users treat common health problems at home. Information on conditions and treatments will allow them to make informed choices about their health care." In other words, the new TV service should stop them having to bother hard-pressed doctors.

ALTHOUGH by no means as lavish as the Scottish parliament (cost of Holyrood so far: £401m and rising), the Welsh assembly doesn't want to be left out in the overspending stakes.

The Welsh assembly's house committee has agreed to start negotiations to buy £750,000 worth of empty land adjoining the new £55m assembly building. Members don't want to buy the land in order to expand, apparently, but because they are concerned that their new Cardiff Bay home may one day be overshadowed and dwarfed by tall office blocks.

Some assembly members have already spotted the obvious flaw in this tactic: the assembly has the power to call in and reject any plan which is inappropriate in terms of architecture or height.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

DESPITE the efforts of Europe's top apparatchiks to delay the full horror of a string of financial scandals coming out into the open, civil lawsuits in the court of first instance (CFI), which is associated with the European court of justice, may yet unblock the stalemate.

Already a pair of such lawsuits is in the pipeline and more could follow.

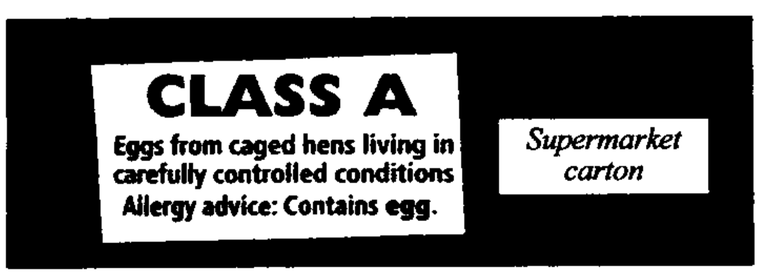
In December 2002, European Commission accounting officer Marta Andreasen, who was suspended by the commission after she had said publicly that the accounting system for the European Union's 100 billion euro budget was open to fraud, asked the court to annul the commission's decision. Her second case, started last June, opposes her continuing suspension and seeks damages.

The CFI says that on average it takes 17 months to process staff cases. If the judges were to come down in Andreasen's favour, more officials who suffered after blowing the whistle might follow her example.

Other potential litigants could also include aggrieved would-be suppliers of professional statistics services to, notably, Eurostat. It is conceivable that firms that tendered for contract work on EU statistics but lost out to the "inner-circle" could claim that the EU's public procurement procedures were rigged.

Worse for the EU would be if it is ever proved that Eurostat was fiddling the actual figures of its own statistics. This could give rise to lawsuits by, say, any EU region that felt hard done by in the awarding of regional funding grants.

For Andreasen, meanwhile, the rules of engagement mean that she has to sue the commission and not an individual official. All officials are protected by a protocol that makes them "immune from legal proceedings in respect of acts performed by them in their official capacity, including their words spoken or written. They shall continue to enjoy this immunity after they have ceased to hold office". The EU may have its faults – but at least it knows how to protect its own.


CLASS A
Eggs from caged hens living in carefully controlled conditions
Allergy advice: Contains egg.
Supermarket carton

POLICE 5

ON 11 December Scotland Yard announced that a 37-year-old Met officer had been arrested and was being questioned about allegations of "misusing police computer information systems" and "passing information to parties outside the police service". The officer has been released on police bail.

The *Eye* understands that the officer served at Ealing police station where, six years ago, Sgt Gurpal Virdi was falsely accused of (and wrongly disciplined for) sending racist mail to himself and fellow officers. Can this be a coincidence?

Meanwhile Supt Ali Dizaei, a former officer of the National Black Police Association who was recently cleared of all charges after a multi-million pound police corruption investigation, has been sent on a senior officers' course in west London. Also attending the course will be Supt Sean Sawyer, one of the many officers who investigated him.

THE murder of PC Ian Broadhurst in Leeds on Boxing Day prompted much soul-searching in the media (should officers be armed? Is it time to bring back hanging?) But it threw up a number of other interesting questions hacks might like to consider.

Who exactly is Norman Brennan, the spokesman for police pressure group "Protect the Protectors", who was quoted all over the place demanding that officers be issued with guns forthwith?

Is he by any chance related to Norman Brennan, "director of the Victims of Crime Trust", who was on the radio within minutes of the Soham verdict last month demanding a tougher sentence for Maxine Carr and questioning the validity of the judgment? Is he the same Norman Brennan who "speaks on behalf" of the mother of murdered toddler James Bulger? Or is he by any chance the same Norman Brennan whom the Metropolitan Police Federation dismissed three years ago as "not holding any position on a representative body", and therefore "totally disassociated itself from any comments made by him"?

The answer to the all the above questions is yes. There are also some other facts that news reporters should bear in mind before calling Mr Brennan for a quote (as they did on 441 different occasions during 2003). Despite rattling off opinions on topics as diverse as prison conditions, the tagging of prisoners, the release of Winston Silcott, the *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* trial and the morals of pop group the So Solid Crew, and advertising himself as an expert on the "criminal justice system", Brennan works as a constable in the British transport police.

He created the Victims of Crime Trust, a registered charity, in 1994, and has run it ever since (latterly with the help of a colleague). Protect the Protectors, which, much to the police federation's chagrin, claims to represent "rank and file" officers, in fact represents one man. Er, PC Norman Brennan.

WORLD'S WORST XMAS CARD

IN THIS year's Worst Christmas Card competition, the entry signed by the East Midlands Conservative Euro Team – including Tory MEPs Chris Heaton-Harris and Roger Helmer – has leapt into first place.

Their pisspoor offering ("With best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Conservative New Year") shows a beaming Santa astride a reindeer singing: "Ho Ho Ho not Euro-Ho!" Though entries are still open, this one will be hard to beat…

AIR RAGE

THE white paper on air transport, published before Christmas, was hopelessly disjointed – its main aim to avoid criticism in the tabloids for curbing cheap flights to Lanzarote or New York. So no change there then.

Air travel can't be isolated from other transport. Passengers, staff, fuel and freight all have to reach airports in large volumes. Yet the government glosses over the implications for surface transport of unrestrained aviation growth.

The east-west Crossrail scheme, to take trains from Kent and Essex through London to Heathrow, is at an advanced planning stage but isn't even mentioned in the paper. The document says no further motorway widening is planned near Heathrow but congestion charging "should be considered". For Stansted, which could soon cater for 80m passengers a year, it lists a few transport schemes which "are likely to require further consideration in the context of a new runway".

To make doubly sure it isn't expected to improve surface transport, the government says developers should pay to upgrade transport networks for additional passengers. That's a cue for more innovations like BAA's Heathrow Express, said to be the world's most expensive train service. It's run for profit, not to maximise the people taking the train to the airport instead of driving.

The government's failure to set binding targets for access by public transport leaves airport operators free to protect the cash cow of (exorbitant) airport car parking while paying lip service to greener alternatives.

To appease the air lobby, Labour discredits the idea of replacing flights with high-speed trains, despite the findings of the royal commission on environmental pollution in November 2002 which said: "It is essential that the government should divert resources into encouraging and facilitating a modal shift from air to high-speed rail." Short-haul passenger flights, such as UK domestic and European journeys, have a disproportionately large impact on the environment.

The white paper predicts only a small switch from air to rail as a result of "planned improvements" to the two Anglo-Scottish mainlines. But neither route will constitute high-speed rail: the fastest trains will share track with commuter and freight trains and reach only 125mph. The paper says rail journeys of up to three hours compete with flights, but for "longer journeys", such as Scotland to London, 93 percent of "business trips" are by air. Scotland to London by rail takes longer than three hours because governments have failed to provide a high-speed line. Paris to Avignon by train takes less than 2 hours 40 minutes; London to Edinburgh – a shorter distance – takes 4 hours 30 minutes. Instead of promising to bring Edinburgh within the three-hour ceiling, the white paper notes "the strategic rail authority is considering the feasibility of proposals" for a high-speed line. Transport secretary Alistair Darling has already rubbished that one, so the air lobby needn't worry.

While outlining the next 30 years of aviation growth with enthusiasm, the state of Britain's surface transport after another 30 years' traffic growth, under-investment, privatisation and inefficiency is so unpalatable it's best ignored.

PS: Though advocates of aviation expansion want Heathrow to remain Europe's biggest airport, it could lose that crown thanks to its pisspoor access compared to rivals. Paris Charles de Gaulle and Frankfurt airports are both on the European high-speed rail network, which will include Amsterdam's Schiphol airport in 2006. Some airlines use high-speed trains instead of aircraft between major cities.

Frankfurt airport managers boast that high-speed rail integration "has expanded the airport's catchment area, raised passenger figures and given us an important competitive edge. At the same time, moving air traffic to the rail eases some of the strain on flight capacity." Meanwhile Heathrow is integrated on the Piccadilly line, calling at Hounslow East, Hounslow Central and, er, Hounslow West.

'Fokker'

FIVE

New Year Seasons (all channels)

IF you were able to park a police car on every street corner, there would probably be less crime. So perhaps the launch at the beginning of 2004 of the "super regulator" Ofcom – a mastiff-like new watchdog with powers of fining and whining over all broadcasters, including the BBC – has had a similar deterrent effect. Certainly the first schedules of the new year are notably cautious, unlikely to upset anyone but not very likely to interest them either.

ITV1, having used the advertising lull over Christmas to hide a classy *Mayor Of Casterbridge* that has been sitting on the shelf at Network Centre for years, returned to familiar pap in the first days of the new calendar. A fifteenth series of *Stars In Their Eyes* was followed by yet another *Midsomer Murders* and a second series of *Fat Friends*.

It's hard to remember a new ITV season with so little new in it. Even the supposedly fresh ideas underline the impression of a creative drought. In *Donovan*, Tom Conti plays yet another television forensic detective, though this one retired and turned to writing. The big documentary offering is yet another series on Churchill, which suggests the network is merely chasing up late the success of recent dramas about him.

The channel also comes very late to makeover shows via *With A Little Bit Of Help From My Friends*, in which Linda Barker "challenges" Neil Morrissey to renovate a warehouse for charity. Given that ITV1 began last year with the brilliant and daring religious drama *The Second Coming* – would that have been risked under Ofcom control? – it's fair to ask if the schedules aren't going backwards under new man Nigel Pickard.

Over at Television Centre, where executives are not only coming to terms with Ofcom but waiting for Hutton, the favoured solution seems to be to broadcast sex and violence but confine it to the animal kingdom. BBC2 launched 2004 with *Ultimate Wild Night*, a segue of zoology repeats, and

BBC1 got going with *Big Cat Week*, a series of live broadcasts from Kenya. Otherwise on the corporation's main channel, recommissions and repeats take more space than innovation.

There's yet another *Redcap*, more *Dalziel and Pascoe*, extra *Auf Weidersehen Pet* and seconds of *Down To Earth*. All channels need their bankers but, when the other main drama event in the first week of the year is a repeat of last year's January smash (Stephen Poliakoff's *The Lost Prince*, aimed at nudging BAFTA jurors), viewers are entitled to mutter that schedules need to invest as well as bank.

As with ITV1, the first-run ideas that there are have the feeling of repeats. Jim Davidson's *Commercial Breakdown* is Jasper Carrott's old gags-about-ads format, merely substituting a cockney comic for a brummie one.

Over on BBC2, the latest *Big Brother* sibling is *Career Boot Camp*, in which a dozen young blokes on the dole spend three weeks under the control of Americans from the American retraining outfit Respect For Life.

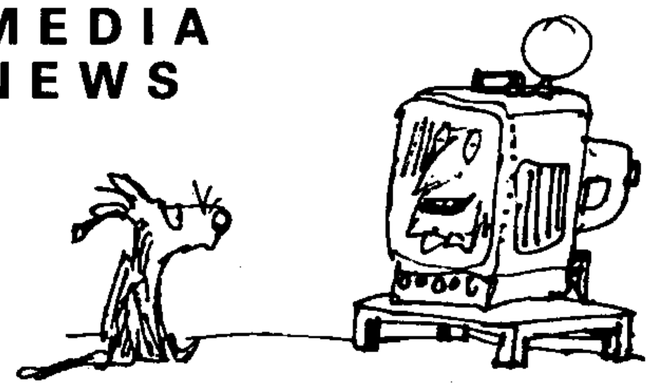
But the most desperate retreads are to be found on the youngest terrestrial channels. Can you really imagine that there's anything left to say in a documentary about Princess Diana, whose life, death and possible afterlife have been explored by British television in a mawkish, continuous four-year autopsy? Well, Channel 4 thinks there's still new soil to be turned over and screens *Di's Guys*, a two-part doc about the princess's fellas.

It was Channel 4 which screened most of the endless series about famous aviation disasters over the last few years. There were so many of them there can't be a single squeak from a black box which hasn't been replayed and analysed. Five, however, believes this morbid subject still has wings and begins 2004 with *Disaster In The Year: Explosive Evidence*, a six-part series which rakes over the ashes of much-reconstructed crashes including, in episode one, the 747 which lost its cargo door in 1989 as it flew to Hawaii.

There's recently been a lot of movement of staff between Channel 4 and Five and there's evidence already in these schedules of the risk that the networks will simply remake each other's old ideas. Unfortunately, Ofcom won't be able to do much about that. On this evidence, a watchdog brought in to make British broadcasting more compliant about complaints and regulations may find itself pleading with the channels to be more dangerous.

'Remote Controller'

MEDIA NEWS



DOES Greg Dyke discuss his plans with senior colleagues? Not always, to judge by the embarrassment endured by two of his lieutenants over the past month.

On 30 November, a front-page splash in the *Sunday Telegraph* revealed that the BBC would compensate John Simpson, John Humphrys et al for their loss of earnings when they are banned from writing newspaper articles. The source for this was an interview with Dyke himself – who, when asked how much had been set aside for reimbursing the moonlighters, had replied that "we'll talk to journalists and we will negotiate with them".

Cue a furious letter to the editor from Sally Osman, head of communications at the BBC, claiming that the article was "based on pure speculation". The *Telegraph*, knowing full well what Dyke had told it, ran Osman's letter under the headline "A non-denial denial".

Meanwhile, a licence-payer wrote to the corporation suggesting that it would be "obscene" to reward top presenters for *not* writing columns. She was mollified by the following answer from Stephen Dando, director of internal resources and internal communications: "We share your concern about these inaccurate media reports and would like to take this opportunity to assure you that it is not the BBC's policy to compensate staff journalists for not being able to publish articles outside the BBC as suggested by recent press reports."

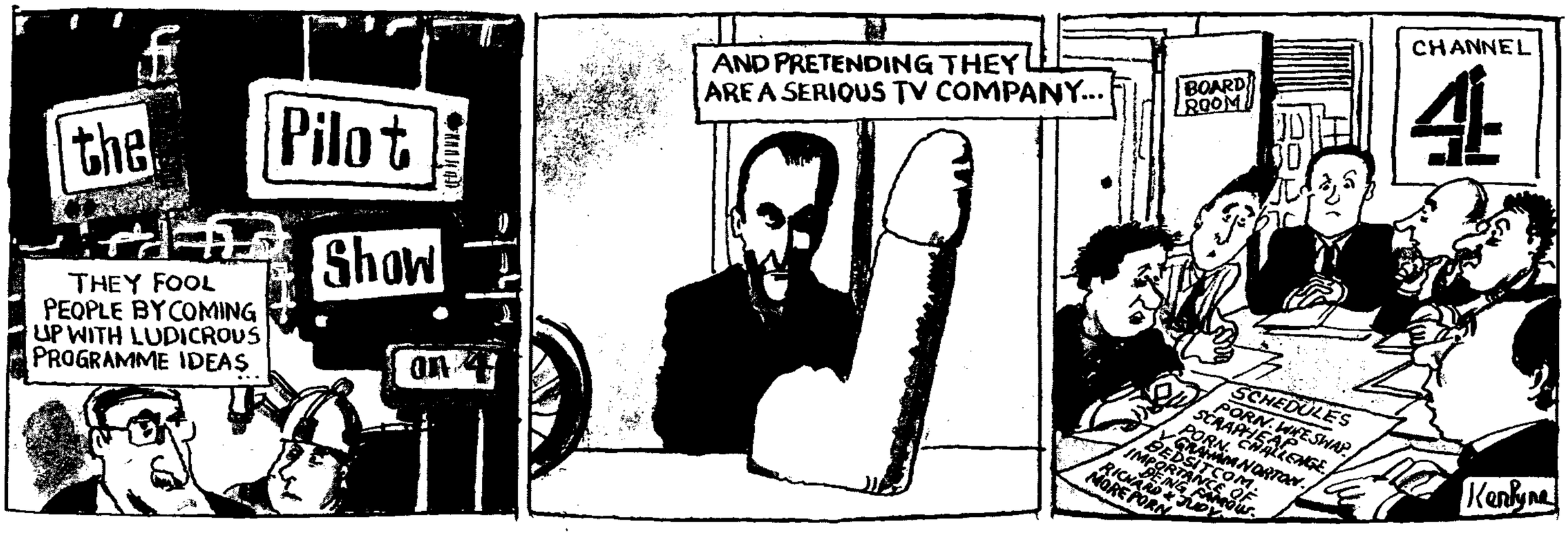
Dando's letter was dated 17 December. But a mere two days later *The Times* printed an interview with Dyke in which the DG happily admitted that he would indeed have to give big pay rises to BBC hacks who had previously been "getting significant sums from elsewhere".

All of which leaves his senior colleagues Osman and Dando looking bloody silly, especially since they both have the word "communications" in their job titles. The next time they're tempted to issue a denial on their boss's behalf they should probably wait for a week or two – just in case Dyke decides to confirm the story instead.

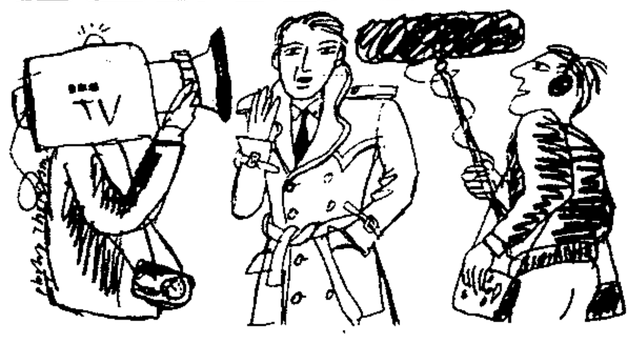
HOW JOURNALISM WORKS

FOLLOWING Maxine Carr's guilty verdict in the Soham trial, the *BBC Breakfast* news put its reporter on the spot when the anchor asked: "Has there been any backlash against Maxine's mother and sister?"

"Not as far as we know… but we've been told not to mention them so that no-one knows," revealed the reporter nervously.



GOING LIVE



ON Friday 2 January, with BA Flight 223 still stuck in its terminal at Heathrow, the BBC's *Six O'Clock News* cut to an interview with security correspondent Frank Gardner who was standing outside the MI5 building in Vauxhall. What can you tell us? Gardner was asked.

"Well," he began, "the people in the building behind me could tell you a lot more than I could." Unfortunately, as the Beeb's man explained, "they're being very cagey." The rest of the broadcast was then taken up with Gardner repeating the same generalised alerts about bombings and hijackings revealed by another BBC reporter at Heathrow moments before.

I-SKY

"Here are TV Biz tips for some of the telly treats in 2004: Nip/Tuck, Sky One… The Sharon Osbourne Show, Sky One".

— The Sun*'s preview of the TV year, which devoted five times as much space to Sky as to the BBC.*

"BBC One ends year in first place," crows the BBC's in-house propaganda rag *Ariel* as the Christmas ratings figures come in. But this is hardly a Reithian ambition and the obsession with ratings does not necessarily mean much in terms of quality (the figures for *The Office* Christmas specials were about the same as those for the Queen and less than half of some of the most popular shows – but so what?).

But if you must talk about ratings, BBC One's audience actually fell by 2.4 percent to just 25.6 percent. With BBC2's share also dropping, all bosses really had to boast about was their lead over the feeble ITV, whose 23.6 percent audience share was for the first time equal to the number of people watching digital channels.

The corporation was not the biggest loser in the 2003 viewing figures, however. That honour belonged to Channel 4, where a record audience collapse took the viewing share below 10 percent for the first time since 1991. But this will be cold comfort to the bean-counters at the BBC who have just invested £5m to poach the "face" of Channel 4, Graham Norton, to front their revamped Saturday nights.

PLUGGED IN

AS THE lead item for its evening bulletin on Saturday 20 December, ITV News reported on the exclusive interview given by the parents of Holly Wells to the *Mail on Sunday*, copies of which would be hitting the streets that night.

The item included several excerpts from the interview, the *MoS*'s masthead and a talking head from an *MoS* hack who was on hand to deliver some "context" for the piece.

Nice publicity if you can get it – but no less than the newspaper would have expected. ITV News is run by ITN, 20 percent of which is owned by the *Mail on Sunday*'s holding company, Daily Mail & General Trust.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"We have had our ups and downs…"

— Lord Marshall, chairman of British Airways, interviewed on C4 News on 16 December about government plans for runway expansion.

THE new, all-embracing communications regulator Ofcom has made an interesting choice in appointing its director for Wales.

Step forward Rhodri Williams. The chairman of the Welsh Language Board featured in *Eye* 1075 after Welsh education bosses had to demand a £4m refund from television and media company Avanti in which Williams was heavily involved. The money was supposed to have funded a media training scheme, but in fact no one was ever trained.

Further back in his career, in 1979 the young Williams served a six-month prison sentence for conspiring to sabotage a television transmitter as part of a militant campaign for Welsh language TV. After jobs in print and at HTV, he founded Agenda, a TV production company providing programmes for S4C – the heavily Welsh language fourth channel founded in 1982.

Those in the business in Wales will undoubtedly be hoping their new watchdog's sabotaging days are over.

"I'll just check where the scheduler's office is now. It keeps moving"

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: In the 18th century, when Scottish crofters were evicted from their cottages, it was known as the Highland... what?

Contestant: Fling.

Robinson: In Tolkien's *Lord Of The Rings* trilogy, the third and final book is called The Return Of The... what?

Contestant: Jedi.

Robinson: In what language, spoken in part of the United Kingdom, was the hymn *Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer* originally written?

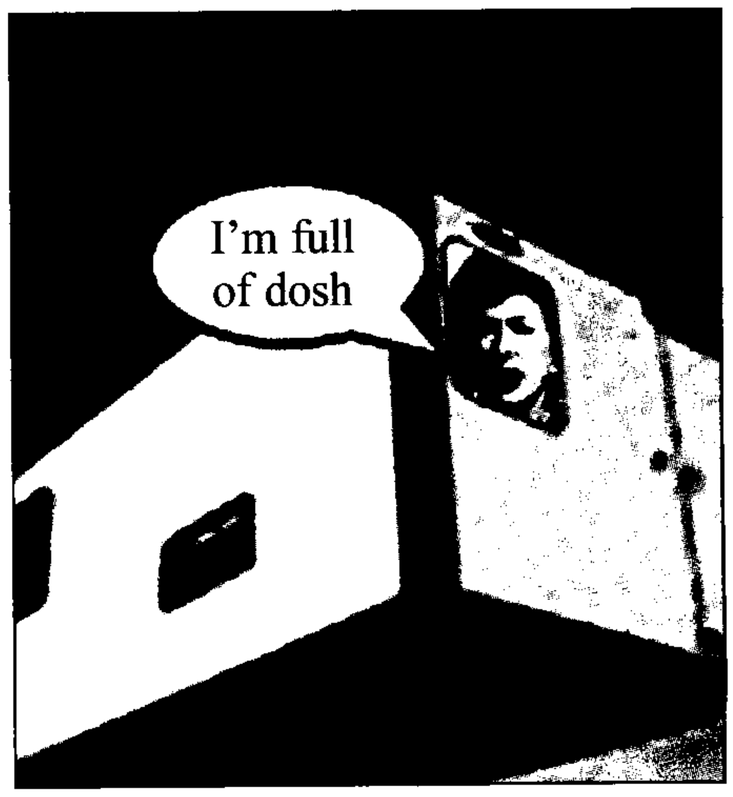
Contestant: Islam.

Robinson: What is the capital of Saudi Arabia?

Contestant (*and eventual winner*): Tel Aviv.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore



Dame Shirley Portakabin

AD NAUSEAM

AN intriguing postscript to the controversial Barnardo's ad campaign (*Eyes passim*): as mentioned last issue, the posters of babies with cockroaches in their mouths have now been banned by the Advertising Standards Authority: but if the words of Barnardo's marketing director are anything to go by, that's just dandy.

Said Andrew Nebel: "We would like to see the debate over the rights and wrongs of the ads move on, as people are now, as a result of this campaign, more aware of the extent of poverty." In other words, ads banned, job done.

PS: BBH, the agency that created the Barnardo's work, was recently made *Marketing* magazine's creative agency of 2003. The Barnardo's campaign was *Campaign* magazine's sixth best print campaign last year. Milking controversy continues to pay dividends in adland.

HUNDREDS of papers from the tobacco industry's main advertisers, collected by the University of Strathclyde for the Commons health select committee inquiry, have just been made publicly available online at www.tobaccopapers.com.

Amid interminable reports on colour quality in poster campaigns, one gem stands out from the report of a January 2000 meeting between tobacco giant Gallaher and M&C Saatchi. Apparently it didn't go down too well with Gallaher bosses when their ads appeared "opposite the Obituary column in the *Bristol Evening Post*."

EXPERIENCED NANCY, with excellent housekeeping skills & high standards seeks position.

Scotsman

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

THE FREEZING JANUARY WEATHER SETS IN:
MMM···THAT ONE LOOKS NICE AND THICK!
FUR MONTHLY
YEAH SHE IS!!! ···LOVELY GIRL THOUGH!
FUR MONTHLY

DOING THE ROUNDS

ON 28 April 1997, 60 esteemed doctors signed a letter to the *Daily Mirror*, advising readers how to vote to save the NHS. "As doctors, we see mounting evidence each day that the NHS is no longer able to care for the nation's sick. Waiting lists grow, bureaucracy has snowballed, the sick lie on trolleys. Doctors and nurses are in despair. Accounting comes before care... Your treatment depends not on your needs but upon where you live...

"The internal market is a cancer eating away at your National Health Service. Left untreated it will destroy that service... if the Tories get in again, the NHS as we know it will disappear. To protect its future we urge you to vote Labour."

Powerful stuff. And Tony Blair was so chuffed with this endorsement, he sent Professor Vincent Marks, then chairman of the BMA, a big thank-you letter and invited him to sit with him at a press conference. Blair also came up with his risible election eve claim that "there are just 24 hours to save the NHS". Nearly seven years later, he's still trying – and with policies the Tories would never have dared to introduce.

In opposition Labour ridiculed private finance initiative financing but was instantly converted to it in office. Despite ex-health secretary Alan Milburn's pledge that "the NHS is not for sale", all new hospital building projects are now farmed out to private companies. This has undoubtedly resulted in lots of new hospitals, and even richer architects. But nearly all are too small, the risk transfer is inadequate and the mortgage interest repayments so high that lower profile areas of the NHS will suffer for years to come.

Even more contentious is that £2bn-worth of lucrative NHS elective surgery is to be offered to private treatment centres largely owned by overseas companies. According to Labour philosophy, these private companies will not be competing with the NHS, they will be part of it; and care will be driven not by the hated internal market but by patient choice.

By negotiating a single tariff for an operation, wherever it is performed, Labour argues that the NHS will not be driven by a market based on cost, but purely on consumer choice. This seems unlikely. The cost of an operation may be fixed, but patients vary enormously in their fitness for surgery and some hospitals or treatment centres may decide to cherry pick the easier cases and then charge a price that is less than the tariff. And there will always need to be a financially-disadvantaged NHS safety net to take on the difficult cases and pick up the pieces when the private sector screws up.

Also, private companies will want a guaranteed workload before setting up treatment centres, and it is hard to see how such a block contract equates with patient choice.

It is also hard to see the distinction between the Tory vision of "self-governing trusts" and Labour's foundation hospitals, which despite their neutered powers will still have unfair financial advantages compared to their neighbours. As with the Tory internal market, the playing field is not level; hospitals in deprived areas with more complex caseloads find it harder to hit the "three star" foundation target than those in more privileged areas. Others get a helping hand.

As the *Health Service Journal* revealed (18 Dec), Alan Milburn intervened in the proposed star rating of South Durham healthcare trust because "it serves the Prime Minister's constituency" (and his own). By some mysterious recalculation, it was upgraded from two to three stars, making it eligible for a £1m capital funding grant and giving it significant freedom from government control.

And so what do those 60 doctors who endorsed "new" Labour so keenly back in 1997 think today? Many of them are having serious second thoughts. Prof Marks contacted 52 of them and has written to the *Eye* with the results.

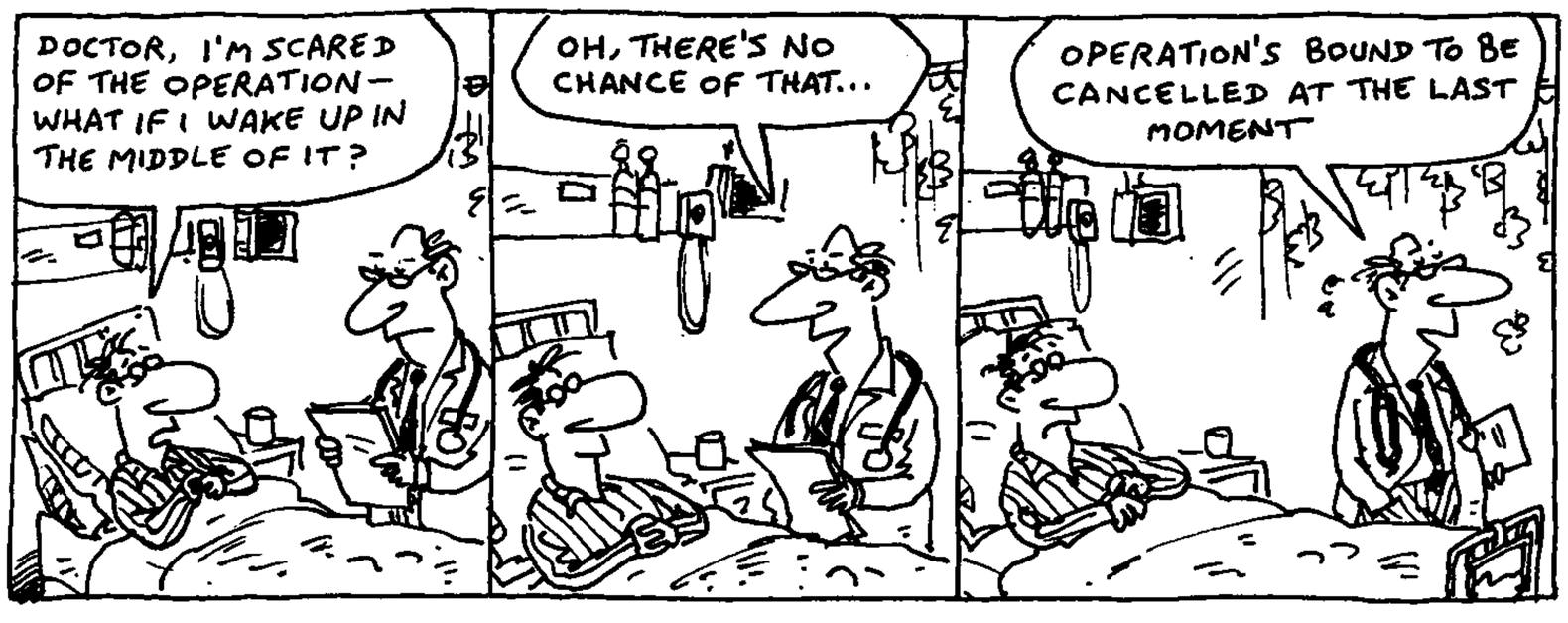
"In my view, the decision to create foundation hospitals and (private) treatment centres is more detrimental to the future of the NHS than any other act since it was first created. The fact that over 90 percent of former strong Labour supporters with genuine knowledge of the situation feel the same should give Blair cause for thought".

But it won't. Happy New Year.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY


DOCTOR, I'M SCARED OF THE OPERATION— WHAT IF I WAKE UP IN THE MIDDLE OF IT?
OH, THERE'S NO CHANCE OF THAT...
OPERATION'S BOUND TO BE CANCELLED AT THE LAST MOMENT

DOWN ON THE FARM

THERE is a tendency to see British farming on a spectrum. At one end it is agri-business: intensive farming on an industrial scale, highly-mechanised, anti-ecological, working for supermarkets. At the other it is organic, small scale, low-tech, eco-friendly, selling locally. That life is not always so simple is illustrated by a curious row in the most beautiful part of the Chilterns, looking down over the Thames valley near Henley.

Regularly used by film companies wishing to recreate England's once green and pleasant landscape at its unspoiled best, the countryside round the hamlet of Southend is so carefully preserved that every tree has a protection order. But in recent years one local farm after another has been bought up by Barry Haigh, a multi-millionaire who made his fortune providing research for drug companies, to assemble Britain's biggest organic dairy business. It operates as Red Kite Farms and features the locally reintroduced bird of prey on its logo.

Run from a complex of vast high-tech modern sheds, this is industrial farming on a scale which would have Lord Haskins drooling with admiration. So large is the Red Kite herd that the cows must often be fed indoors because their natural grazing is too far way. Throughout the year huge tractors carry mountains of silage back to Southend Farm, while conveyor belts move the cows through the industrial process like clockwork.

Red Kite's "Farm Mission" on its website is "to develop and market profitable added value organic milk-based products through innovation resulting in a constant escalation of standards of processes, procedures and cow welfare". "Our core value", it goes on, "is integrity which pervades our business dealings, our customer relationships and our animal welfare"; while, under the heading "Our Behaviour", the statement concludes: "Our consideration is for customers, animals and ourselves in that order."

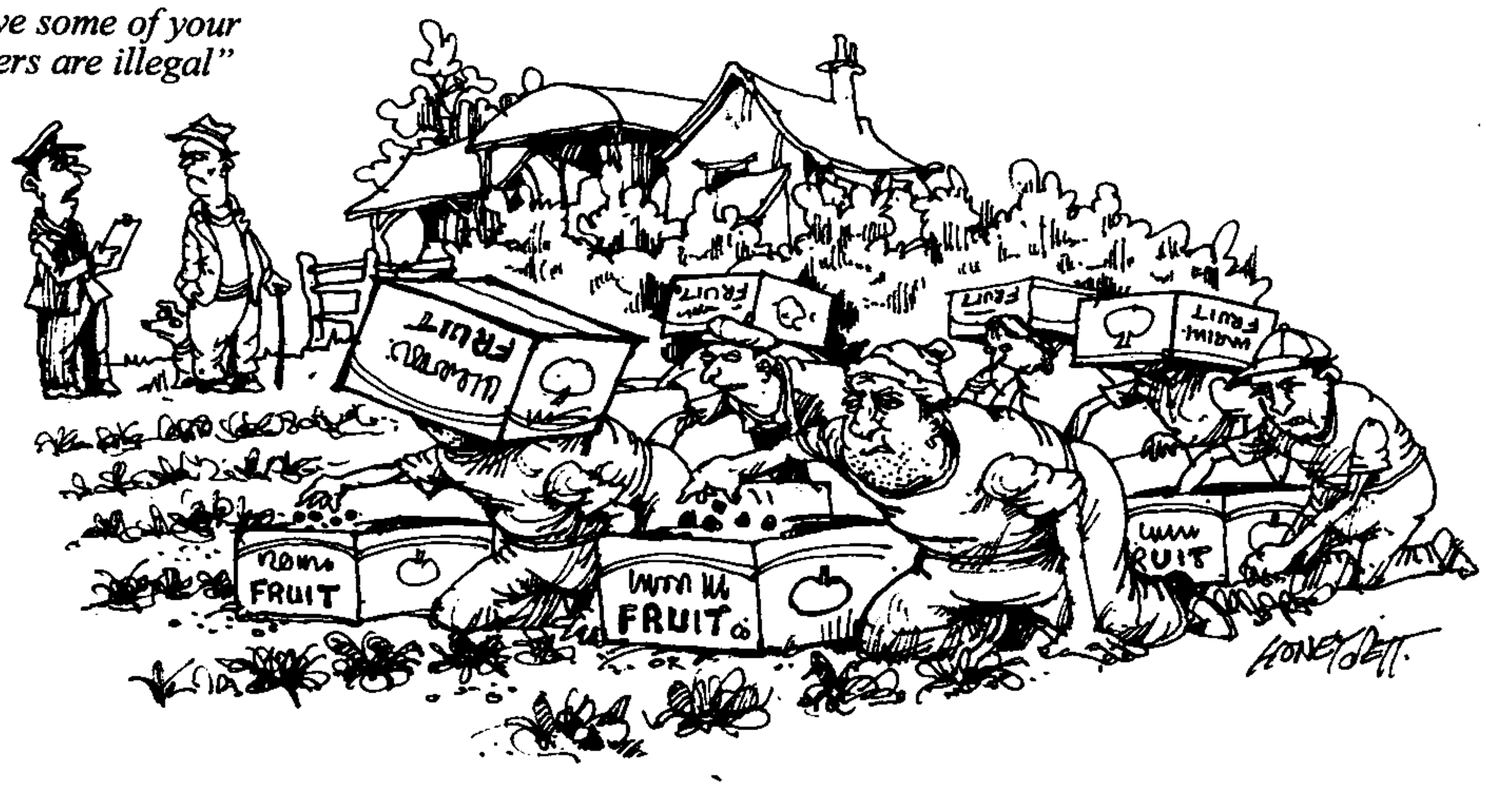
Certainly the customers seem happy, since Red Kite's commercial success is centred on a lucrative contract to supply organic milk to Waitrose supermarkets, much to the chagrin of other organic dairy producers who, to ensure their survival, have battled to keep the supplying of super-markets on a collective basis. But the statement significantly makes no mention of consideration for "neighbours" in the local community, who regard the rise of the Red Kite empire as something of a cuckoo in their nest.

The latest row centres on Red Kite's application just before Christmas for permission to build a new private access road or "super highway" for its giant tankers and tractors, across fields immediately behind the cottages which stand on the local common. Confronted with the likelihood that a large chunk of these fields may soon disappear beneath a continuous stream of traffic, aggrieved locals point to the irony of Red Kite's handsomely-crafted wooden footpath signs, showing the celebrated local bird of prey and asking walkers to "respect the biodiversity of the local environment".

But it can't be long before Lord Haskins, as Tony Blair's chief guru on the future of farming, singles out Red Kite as a perfect symbol of the way British agriculture must now develop. Meanwhile, as those Waitrose customers sip their organic milk, they can dream of cows peacefully grazing in sunlit, flower-filled meadows, imagining how they are doing their bit to save the planet.

'Muckspreader'

"I have reason to believe some of your workers are illegal"



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

TOWER HUMBUG

IT WASN'T much of a Christmas at Labour-run Tower Hamlets council in east London. In fact, if you worked in the social services department it wasn't any sort of "Christmas" at all, because the word itself was banned.

Staff who had planned to sit down together for an office Christmas lunch were told by management that the C-word was banned lest Muslims or other non-Christians were "offended". The lunch could be called a "celebration" or "festive" meal, decreed social services director Ian Wilson, but it couldn't be called a "Christmas" anything.

But, said staff, no objection to "Christmas" had been made by anyone. Nevertheless, bosses were unbending in their PC po-facery. So the staff told them to stuff it, cancelled the do and went down the pub instead.

THE TALE OF GHOLAM

LABOUR'S zero-tolerance approach to wrongdoing is clearly evident in Rochdale, where Cllr Gholam Murtaza steadfastly clings to office... despite the revelation in the local paper, the *Middleton Guardian*, that he had served a jail sentence for assaulting two female detectives with a kitchen knife.

Taxi driver Murtaza was jailed for six months in June 1998 after an incident at his home. According to electoral law, the conviction should have disqualified him from standing as a candidate in last May's local elections, but he was selected anyway, even though senior figures in the local Labour party, including Heywood and Middleton MP Jim Dobbin, knew of the conviction.

Murtaza was duly elected. When his past was revealed, he at first offered to resign but then mysteriously changed his mind. This surely can't have been because someone reminded him that, if he stood down, Labour would lose its overall majority and therefore control of the council.

GAGGING FOR IT

AFTER a series of scandals at Flintshire county council in recent years, the body representing local authorities in Wales has come up with an idea to prevent any repetition.

The scandals, detailed in past issues of the *Eye*, first came to light in a report prepared by the council's former internal auditor, Andy Sutton, who won an unfair dismissal case last year after senior councillors and officers attempted to stop him doing his job. The Welsh Local Government Association has now come up with a plan to stop any such thing happening again. But the Big Idea is not to crack down on corruption and incompetence or to strive for greater openness and accountability.

Instead the WLGA wants it to become a criminal offence for anyone to disclose information obtained by a local government auditor and to give Welsh councils a veto over critical reports on their conduct – thereby giving comfort to the crooked and incompetent and punishing whistleblowers.

The proposed gagging clause was first aired in evidence to the Welsh affairs committee of the House of Commons by the WLGA and is now contained in clause 54 of the public audit (Wales) bill, currently before parliament. Unless it is stopped at committee stage, it will become law later this year and Wales, as Mr Sutton said last week, will become "effectively a banana republic". (If, that is, one generously assumes it isn't one already.)

"We've found older employees to be just as productive, if not more so"

STONE FREE

THE AMNESIA that troubled so many Doncaster councillors in the 1990s when it came to completing their expenses claims appears to have affected colleagues in nearby Rotherham.

Rotherham council's recently elevated leader, Cllr Roger Stone, forgot within a matter of a few days that he had travelled from Scotland in the car of his crooked friend and fellow councillor Garvin Reed, and not on the train for which he was claiming a £50 fare. The false claim, made in 1998, was originally uncovered by detectives investigating the scandal of the national local government forum against poverty (*Eyes passim*), which led to Reed, the council's former deputy leader, being jailed for three years in 2002 for misusing more than £150,000 which he spent on drink, meals, hotels and prostitutes.

The police failed to prosecute Stone at the time, even though similar cases in Doncaster were resulting in prison sentences. When his embarrassment came to light, Stone loftily declared that it was all down to a confused claims procedure and that he was "happy for my record on expense claims to be subject to the closest scrutiny". Taking him at his word, objectors found another nine "inappropriate" claims.

Stone says these were all simple oversights and has repaid a total of £215. Despite calls for his resignation from the job he has held for just three months, Rotherham's new leader has received the backing of his Labour colleagues, who hold 59 of the council's 66 seats.

● FINALLY, a Happy New Year to councillors on the West Yorkshire fire authority, who in December voted themselves the sort of pay rise that even firemen's union leader Andy Gilchrist might balk at. Not 7 percent, not 16 percent, not even 40 percent – but 45 percent for authority members and a truly magnificent 72 percent for chairman Harry "Cunning As A" Fox. Tally ho!

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

A LESSON in economics is needed by Westminster councillors who appear to be belatedly "doing the math" over plans to create two city academies.

Under the city academy scheme (another way to get private firms to invest in schools) running costs are met directly by the Department for Education and Skillz (DfES) while sponsors invest in the building or modernisation of the premises.

With the arrival of Westminster's city academies (scheduled for September), around £4m education funding will go directly to the schools through the DfES rather than through Westminster council. The sum is a significant portion of the local education authority's £15m secondary school budget.

Town hall education chiefs have told local reporters at *West End Extra* that this may mean the whole LEA becomes "financially unviable" and preparations could be needed to stave off total financial collapse. Some form of whole-borough privatisation — possibly a not-for-profit trust — has been mooted. Meanwhile opposition councillors suggest the imminent financial catastrophe is an illusion designed to convince people that privatisation of the whole education authority is the only choice.

It's worth noting that one of the academies is to be sponsored by a private sector partnership headed by Chelsfield plc — the property development company leading parts of the Paddington Basin scheme where the NHS is facing hugely escalating costs on its Paddington Health Campus PFI scheme (*Eye* 1087).

BOFFINS at exam regulation quango the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) are rather behind the times on their astronomy. Pre-Copernican, in fact.

The latest missive from the QCA to science teachers, providing guidance for preparing for the Key Stage 3 tests notes: "Many pupils gave one reason why one planet may take longer to orbit the Earth than another."

Should pupils who dare suggest the planets actually orbit the sun be dragged before the Spanish inquisition for their heliocentric heresy, one wonders?

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

IT'S SUCH A BUZZ BEING ASKED TO GUEST DJ AT THIS GIG!
BRING ON DA BLING, BRUV!
WE'RE PACKING A FEROCIOUSLY ECLECTIC MIX OF AGGRESSIVE HOUSE, TRANSIENT HIP-HOP AND SOME OF THE PHATTEST GANGSTA RAP VIBES ON VINYL !!!
HOW MANY TIMES DO WE HAVE TO TELL YOU, MAN, WE'RE NOT PLAYING "THE WHEELS ON THE BUS" !!!
HAPPY 6th BIRTHDAY ROLLO!

Number crunching

1,782 ■ Number of teachers in the NASUWT union who have been investigated by police over allegations of sexual, physical or verbal assault in the past 12 years (resulting in suspensions, public embarrassment and immense stress)

69 ■ Number of actual convictions (3 percent)

World of Art

CONCEPTUALISE this. You fancy yourself as a Young British Artist. You're sitting in a pub and you've just had this great idea (hic!) for a site-specific installation. You're gonna cover Nelson's Column with a giant condom! Yeah, what a statement. So you scribble it on the back of a fag packet and next morning you think, er, how am I going to make that?

Then you remember. You're an artist! You don't have to "make" things. You just call up the Mike Smith Studio and get them to make it for you. They'll work everything out, do the technical drawings, research the materials, source that special resin or whatever you need, and make that huge condom. They might even be able to suggest a title. Nelson's Condom, say, or Give Sheath a Chance. Hey, it might even win the Turner!

To judge by *Making Art Work: Mike Smith Studio* (ed Patsy Craig, Trolley, £39.95), such a daft scenario is less far fetched than you might imagine. This book is a celebration of the work of the "star fabricator" Mike Smith, without whom most of the YBAs would not have been able to produce the conceptual detritus that clutters up the Saatchi and Tate collections and provokes so many satisfying column inches of art-rage.

Smith trained as an artist and is, arguably, still working as one. Over the last decade and a half he has been beavering away in the Old Kent Road to produce works of art "by" Damien Hirst, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Michael Landy, Rachel Whiteread and others. Now he has decided it's time for a bit of recognition. But the book goes further than that. By revealing in some cases how much of the input comes from Smith, it begs the whole question of who the author of these "seminal" works of art really is. It blows a long hard whistle on the pretensions of some of these great clients of his.

So who is Mike Smith? He says he's an artist who decided he was "interested in a wider range of ideas than I could generate myself". He sees himself as a problem-solver. Many of the artists who use him agree. They get him to fabricate their works because if they went to an ordinary metalwork shop or carpenter or engineer they'd get funny looks or be asked to pay in advance.

Smith is attuned to their artistic way of thinking. He knows what they want sometimes better than they do themselves. "People come here with an idea of something they want to do," he says, "and they don't know how to do it." (Of course not, they're artists.) "They have an image of it," and Smith & Co have to "make the physical expectation of that image real".

A classic example of a Smith production was Rachel Whiteread's site-specific installation for the empty fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square. "Monument" simply inverted a transparent copy of the plinth on top of the original. What a marvellous expression of the concept of utter vacuity! It's a plinth, and it's empty. Wow!

What most people don't realise is that this fatuous visual gag took Smith and his studio three years to make and employed 23 people in the process. Smith had an "enormous sense of satisfaction", he says, "in managing to pull something off like that."

Smith was also responsible for Hirst's formaldehyde tanks and other big glass structures for artists like Gavin Turk and Alex Hartley. The latter rather ungraciously categorises a typical Mike Smith production as "minimalism with a twist" and "bombastic work with super slick finishes".

Often it involves taking some ordinary object and simply making a very large version of it. Examples include Mona Hatoum's oversize vegetable grater, Michael Landy's giant wood chipper, and Darren Almond's huge flip-clocks and calendars. But Claes Oldenburg was making massive sculptures of household objects way back in the 60s. So if an artist has a not very original idea and gets someone else to do all the actual work of creating it, who deserves the credit?

William Furlong, whose interviews of Smith and his clients form the bulk of the text, wonders whether, if artists are no longer making and doing things for themselves, they are more like Renaissance painters who employed a "studio" of assistants? This ignores the difference between mixing a few paints or colouring in the background, and completing the entire work. A better model might be the ghost or editor who actually writes the celebrity's book, or the record producer who turns the budding (or fading) pop star's efforts into a proper song.

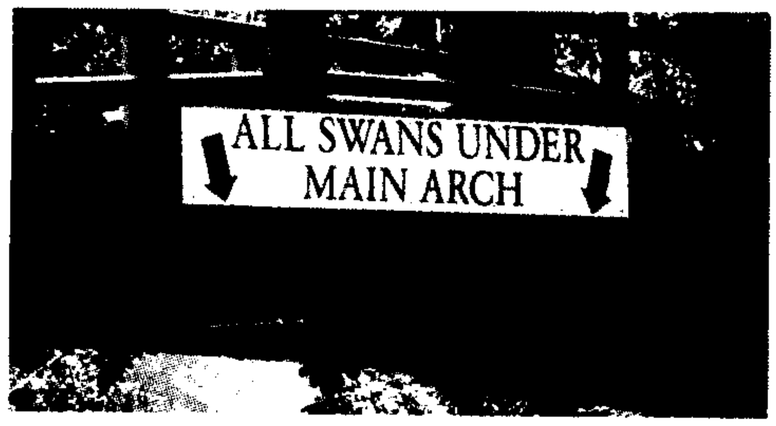
Furlong asks about the nature of the "collaboration" and whether Smith should be able to claim some portion of authorship of finished works. Naturally, the artists deny this hotly, though Whiteread is astute enough to suggest Smith should keep a copyright in his processes. (Presumably, if anyone then tries to rip something off, Smith can litigate instead of the cash-strapped artist.) Patsy Craig, the studio's archivist, complains that the fine art world tends to be "just mildly egocentric where issues of accreditation are concerned".

Smith himself is more equivocal about his claim to some of the limelight. "I want the studio to have recognition," he says, "but not at the expense of not being in business." In other words, he knows which way his bread is buttered: by keeping his clients flattered. He freely admits: "I have made things which aren't that interesting." But he daren't say that to the artists, lest they take their funded commissions elsewhere or, like Dada Hirst himself, set up their own little Warholy factories.

PS: That fourth plinth is now empty again, with plans for a new installation every other year. The current shortlist includes a car covered in pigeon-shit (by Sarah Lucas) and a pair of phallic wooden torpedoes (by Stefan Gec). It'll be funded by the Ken Livingstone Foundation or "KLF" as it's known in the trade. Anyone with a wacky idea should perhaps send it to Mike Smith's studio. As his client Darren Almond says: "You can really have fun with Mike and suggest the most ridiculous of ideas and he will take them seriously and come back to you in two days with probably a solution."

Making Art Work: Mike Smith Studio
(ed Patsy Craig, Trolley, £39.95)

I-SPY *Scarborough*



Submitted by Eric Russell. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE London Symphony Orchestra is making a lot of noise about 2004 being its centenary year. And why not? By general consent it is the nearest thing Britain has to one of the truly great international ensembles.

Over the past 20 years it has reformed itself from an undisciplined, hard-drinking, hotel-wrecking collective of musical brutes (for chapter and verse see Richard Morrison's centenary book, new out from Faber) into a paradigm of performing excellence and good behaviour.

The *pièce de resistance* for its anniversary has been the opening of St Luke's: the orchestra's spectacular new education centre-cum-rehearsal, recording and chamber-concert space in a converted church north of the Barbican. As the LSO's publicity machine has trumpeted over recent weeks, no other London orchestra has anything comparable to St Luke's and its existence puts the LSO in a different league to its rivals. But there are a couple of points the PR people have been less keen to make.

One is that the admitted £18m cost of St Luke's – a sum that is twice the orchestra's annual turnover and that has been hard to cover – is not the true cost. Sources at the LSO whisper in alarm that the true figure could be much higher, that the orchestra hasn't a hope of raising it, and that the debt will wipe out all the careful planning of the past years for a sure financial future.

In fact, so cash-strapped is the St Luke's project that LSO Discovery, the music education project based at the church, is to be the main beneficiary of this year's lord mayor's appeal for charitable good causes. "Please join in," begs the appeal literature. "We need notes. And cheques."

The other point is that for all the money poured into it, St Luke's… er… doesn't work. Just ask the orchestra's own principal conductor, Sir Colin Davis. A couple of weeks ago at a Berlioz Society conference that he obviously didn't expect to be reported, Sir Colin said that the St Luke's acoustic was disappointing and that he didn't consider it good enough either to rehearse or record in.

In fact the St Luke's project is beginning to look like an expensive white elephant. And while the orchestra wonders what it's got itself into, the sound of hands being rubbed together in glee is coming from some of the other London bands who wouldn't be upset to see the LSO brought down a peg or two. The over-ambition of the centenary year might grant them their wish.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

So much for your New Year's Resolution, Sophie–you're smoking like a chimney!
Yeah, well, I've got the stress of a new show to work for...
...and I've got to do something with my hands!
Where d'you want these bits?
Stick them on top somewhere.

Rugbyballs

"Jonny Wilkinson's famous last-minute drop goal which clinched the rugby world cup for England produced a national feelgood factor which triggered a sharp rise in the number of offers from homebuyers, say estate agents." — *Southern Property Advertiser*.

Letters

MM-argument

Sir,

I would like to congratulate Heather Mills and Private Eye on the well-informed and balanced reporting on this controversial issue. She like me was clearly struck by the ill-informed and sometimes offensive reviews/commentary on the recent Channel 5 drama, "Hear the Silence". I wonder what she could have been referring to.

Perhaps she had read a piece in the Observer by that "columnist of the year" David Aaranovich entitled "A Travesty of the Truth" in which he compared the parents' concerns about MMR to concerns expressed in Sudan about the effects of shaking hands with black men. Columnist of the year, my arse! Perhaps she had read the review in the Observer by Robin McKie in which he described Andy Wakefield as a "maverick quack" and the gluten/dairy free diet as a "nutty idea".

I am sure that Heather Mills would agree with me that the likes of Messrs Aaranovich and McKie should get out there and learn a little more about this subject before writing about it in such certain terms. They might want to speak to parents of autistic children about their experiences, not only about their child's condition but also about the response from the medical profession. They might want to actually read some of the research produced by Andy Wakefield (and others). Perhaps then they would not make such ill-informed and offensive comments when they come to put pen to paper.

STEPHANE PENDERED,

Via email.

Sir,

Heather Mills exhibits the usual unavoidable bafflement of the journalist when faced with science. Because journalists can never quite comprehend how correct scientific research is done, they have to fall back - for support - on what they fondly believe to be dependable indicators. For instance, she thinks that because someone has published - and continues to publish - papers in reputable journals, then all of his conclusions must be viable.

Unfortunately, the history of science is littered with scientists who had crackpot obsessions unsupported by valid experimental data. The case of Newton has now been exposed ad nauseam. But Crookes and Lodge also made fools of themselves by writing "scientific" papers about the paranormal.

That is not to suggest that the single-vaccine research should be suppressed; it should instead appear in a more suitable forum. May I propose the conspiracy magazine, Nexus.

(DR) DAVID J.FISHER,

Via email.

Sir,

Disillusioned former members of Frank Furedi's Revolutionary Communist Party may have been a mite surprised to see Dr Michael Fitzpatrick's claim that Andrew Wakefield is now part of "a fundamentalist cult" (MMR: HEAR THE ROW, Eye 1096).

Back when Furry Frank's splinter of a splinter of a Trotskyite faction met in secret on dodgy caravan sites, posing as a visiting archaeological society, Dr Fitz was among the most fervent of Furry Frank's supporters.

Eyebrows may also have been raised by Dr Fitz's denunciation of those who raise questions about the MMR vaccine, as little short of child murderers. Bosnian Moslims and Rwandan Tutsis may want to measure such an intensity of humanitarian concern against Dr Fitz's long-term involvement in LM, the Furedi-ite rag that played into the hands of genocidal killers in Rwanda and war criminals in Bosnia and Belgrade, by denying the significance, and in some instances even the reality, of their crimes against humanity.

These days Fitzpatrick's health column in LM has made way for one in the Lancet. Onwards and upwards!

Sincerely,
PETER BROWN,

Chagford, Devon.

Lookalike

Boris **World Idol**

Sir,

Has Boris decided that bumbling through speeches is just not enough anymore?

Congratulations on being World Idol, Mr Johnson.

PETER BOTTING,

Eastbourne.

Anoraks on fire

Sir,

If you must publish letters from fellow anoraks please check their content. Your correspondent Graham Figg is entirely correct on the inadequacies of the Airfix Spitfire MkIX but as any fule kno, it was paired with the Messerschmitt BF-110. The Me BF-109G-6 that Graham refers to was of course paired with the Bristol Beaufighter TFX in a different Dogfight Double kit.

Nurse, the screens...

Yours sincerely,
PAUL GRZELAK,

Via email.

"These days we have several announcements to make about the exits and toilets, as we have to take evacuation procedures very seriously."

— Debora Matthews, Executive Director, Judicial Studies Board

Opening remarks to the Magistrates New Training Initiative workshop at Millbank Tower, 4/12/03

Scenes You Seldom See

"No round robin from the Bridgewaters – and I was really looking forward to reading their news"

Ira-te

Sir,

Re: Scenes You Seldom See (1096). It would indeed be rare to hear Summertime sung to the words the composer wrote. I wasn't even aware George Gershwin HAD written words for it. The only ones I know are from the libretto by Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward.

ROBERT CANNING,

Via email.

Wrong Leeds

Sir,

Although appreciative of your alerting us to the appalling goings-on currently befalling the Royal College of Music, I cannot forbear to point out that, as any musical fule north of Watford kno, the excellent Royal Northern College of Music is actually a Manchester institution and not a Leeds one. I'm sure you wouldn't wish to provoke another skirmish in the War of the Roses while performing your vital task of keeping your readers informed about murkier aspects of the contemporary scene.

Regards,
JON TURNER,

Derby.

● *Lunchtime O'Boulez writes: Er... slip of the brain. I don't know why I put Leeds not Manchester, I've spent enough time in the place. Must have been Christmas. Sorry.*

Bullet points

Sir,

Re:the letter of Alex Craven-Griffiths (issue 1096).

He claimed that Mikhail Kalashnikov never made sub-machine guns. In the spirit of your excellent "Pedant" Christmas card, I'd like to point out that prior to making his infamous assault rifle, he produced the Test Model 1942 sub-machine gun, the operating mechanism of which evolved into the rifle that now bears his name. Furthermore, many AK rifles are produced in extremely truncated forms that fulfil the role of, and are frequently designated, sub-machine guns, such as the AKS-74U (the "U" suffix means "Ukorochennyj" in Russian; "Shortened" in English).

Pedantry aside, I hope never to look down the wrong end of any kind of gun, and think it's a shame that so much or the world's technology and industry goes into the creation of weapons. Let's hope 2004 will see some of the ingenuity that man shows in snuffing out the life of his fellow man being diverted into bettering it. I suppose it must be the old hippy in me speaking.

Respectfully,
KNACKERED KNACKER
OF THE MET,

Via email.

Clutching at Strawbs

Sir,

"Part of the Union", which you describe as an "old trade union song immortalised by the Strawbs", was in fact written c. 1972 by the workers' co-operative of Rick Hudson and John Ford while they were still, er, part of the Strawbs.

Furthermore, far from being a workers' hymn, the song poked fun at the excesses of the Scargill-style trade unionism so prevalent at the time.

The agency creatives who chose the song for the advert may not have seen past the weak pun on Norwich Union's name and life insurance business, but if they did, they were probably making an ironic statement about the erosion of trade union rights over the last 30 years.

Yours sincerely,
STRAWBSFAN,

Via email.

"No dear... only the nappies are disposable"

LUVVIES

"I don't know how else to put it," the recently-knighted Kingsley told the New York Daily News. "Before, I was acting more for myself. Now I'm doing it for my country because my country has asked me to."

BEN KINGSLEY

Submitted by Alison Jones.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

Talking Horrocks

Sir,

Jane Horrocks, besides being a fine actress, is a sufferer from obsessive compulsive disorder, and in my ever so humble opinion, that makes her achievements as an actress all the more superb. I think it also makes your luvvies quote in Eye 1096 rather unfair.

Yours faithfully,
PETER PARKINSON,

Antibes, France.

Listing buildings

Sir,

The Royal Festival Hall isn't the only postwar grade I listing. Piloti forgets the glorious Royal College of Physicians in Regent's Park, Denys Lasdun's masterwork of 1960-64, which was listed grade 1 on 24 April 1998. It's an unmissable delight, open to all at London Open House each year.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT HORNUNG,

London W5.

East-West effect

Sir,

There has been much debate recently about the pros and cons of moving British companies' call centres to the Far East. I wonder whether you have any photographs in your archives showing the beneficial effects of Anglo-Asian cooperation?

Yours,
NEIL McARTHUR,

Via email.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The 25-year-old [Cory Spinks] is the son of former heavyweight champion Leon Spinks and former heavyweight title-holder Michael Spinks."

BBC Sport website
(Peter Stevens)

"Robbie Fowler has been scoring goals like that since before he was almost born."

KEVIN KEEGAN, Radio 5 Live
(Robert Crawford)

"He [Michael Jackson] is a child trapped in the body of a five-year-old man."

URI GELLER, Radio Scotland
(David Sterratt)

"We had ten times as many shots on target as Bolton, and they had none at all..."

SIR BOBBY ROBSON
(Richard Gray)

"Today's been a good day for Wayne [Rooney], but he's understood that on another day it could've been a bad day..."

DAVID MOYES, ITV
(Olly Skinner)

To Elland back

Sir,

I fear your correspondent, "Leeds Supporter", may be one of the See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Say No Evil monkeys if he really believes his beloved LUFC are at the forefront of racial tolerance.

May I suggest he attends Elland Rd for a game as an away fan or perhaps goes to a few more away games where his lovely "colleagues" really show their true colours. As a Coventry fan we are now rid of them (although the way they are going, we will soon get them back) and their lovely chants of "You're just a town of Pakis" and other charming ditties. The same, by the way, goes for the "marvellous" Toon Army who also have that song amongst their Greatest Hits. It is for Leeds only that our local police have had their and their horses' work cut out in the last few years.

JULIAN GENT,

Buckinghamshire.

Sir,

I read with utter disbelief the letter from the Leeds Supporter (1096) in which he claims that Leeds fans are not racist. I have attended hundreds of Premiership matches, and without doubt, Leeds are the most reprehensible set of fans in Britain, if not the world. Not only do they hiss and perform Nazi salutes when playing Spurs (a team with Jewish connections), but they also take delight in singing songs that mock the Munich Air disaster and I have witnessed the regular stoning of opposition supporters' coaches in and around Elland Road. When Matt Busby died, every ground in the country held a perfectly observed minute's silence, with the exception of Elland Road. It was so bad that the players pointedly turned their backs on their own fans in disgust.

Yours,
ED CURTHOYS,

Via email.

Sir,

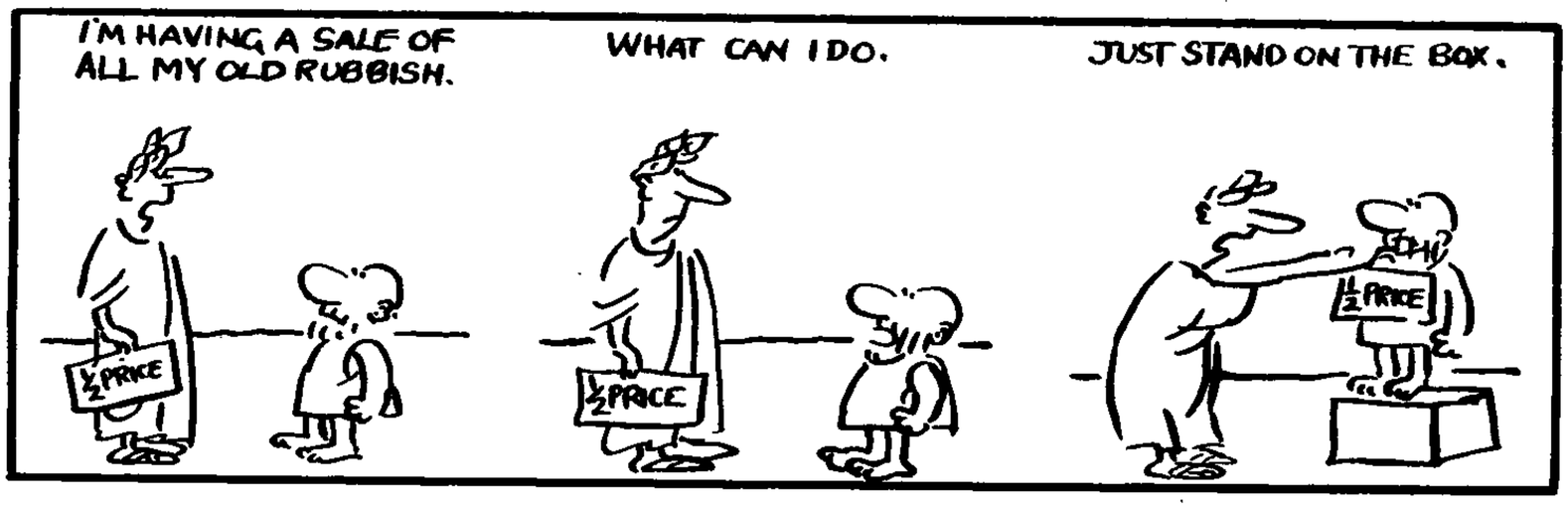
*Whilst enjoying the otherwise admirable defence of his excellent cartoon "Premiersh*ts" from Eye 1095 I spotted a small flaw which rather undermined his arguments. It is not in dispute that Lee Bowyer once used the reported phrase, but unfortunately, he was not a Leeds player at the time, and as the Leeds supporter points out nor is he one now. He is of course now at Newcastle United under the grandfatherly tutelage of Sir Bobby Robson, but at the time of his offence, he was employed by Charlton Athletic FC. It is a little unfair, therefore to make Leeds a target for that particular disgraceful incident.*

Yours etc,
COLIN WARNER (Charlton Supporter),

Via email.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



Letter from **Israel**

from Our Own Correspondent

OUR prime minister Ariel Sharon may be getting on a bit, but even at 76 his arithmetic remains sharp.

When he announced the "painful concession" of removing 13 unlicensed Israeli settlements in the occupied territories in December 2003, he had done his sums: these were exactly one tenth of the 130 unlicensed (but army protected) settlements established under his rule. The rest will stay – as will the 145 older, licensed ones, forming a permanent Israeli space.

Also staying is the 12ft separation wall currently being built around Palestinian towns and villages. In other words, the aims of Sharon's much-vaunted "unilateral steps" are no different from the Old Bulldozer's life-long one: a Greater Israel.

If his current plan succeeds, a mere 10 percent of pre-1948 Palestine will be left for its Arab residents. "It's yes to peace, no to the Palestinians," quipped one Israeli satirist. Or as Sharon's contemporary, the peace campaigner Uri Avneri, put it: "Palestinian territory is being scissored into pieces to create isolated Palestinian enclaves, each of them an open air prison."

Sharon's plan is the formalisation of a policy which has already caused us Israelis lots of trouble, including the freezing of our diplomatic relations with Egypt and Jordan, and the collapse of our over-taxed economy. Even the ever-loving Bush administration reacted by cutting some minor loan-guarantees in protest.

The plan also strengthened those in the Palestinian camp whose only policy idea is to create a lot more dead Israelis. Terror bombings are now often carried out the very day after Israeli troops have killed Palestinians. The resulting grim quality of Israeli life makes other countries more attractive: for the first time, young Israelis are applying in some numbers for *German* citizenship on the strength of having a grandparent born there.

Even the loyalty of the top brass can no longer be taken for granted. Four former heads of our fabled Shinbet intelligence service have publicly declared that Sharon's "war on terror" cannot be won. His chief of staff, Lt Gen Moshe Ya'alon, has called the present policy "destructive". Twenty-seven Israeli pilots have refused to carry out any more occupation missions and the members of the elite Matkal unit, whose soldiers carried out the daring raid on Entebbe in 1976, joined their unprecedented stand.

A beleaguered Sharon must now rely on support elsewhere. The prime minister, a secular *sabra* – that once admired class of "new Jews" born in the homeland but without any religious attachment – is still loved by most of Israel's one million Russian immigrants, a community well used to governments which flatten minorities. He is also liked by the religious settlers who don't care how he realises their dream of building an air-conditioned replica of biblical Israel in a place inhabited by others. "The practical side is none of my business," a settler leader told a cabinet minister on a recent West Bank visit.

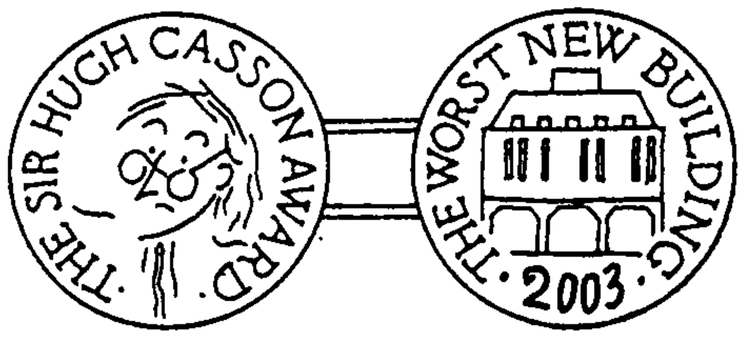
Those who find it more difficult to overlook "the practical side", of course, are the Palestinians. Most now have to clamber through a narrow gap in a concrete wall in order to leave their homes. To discourage even this population movement, soldiers regularly force them to wait for up to 48 hours at their checkpoints. This makes it not just impossible for Palestinians to go to school, hospital or work, but even to the toilet. There are no sanitary facilities and drivers waiting to pass may not leave their cars.

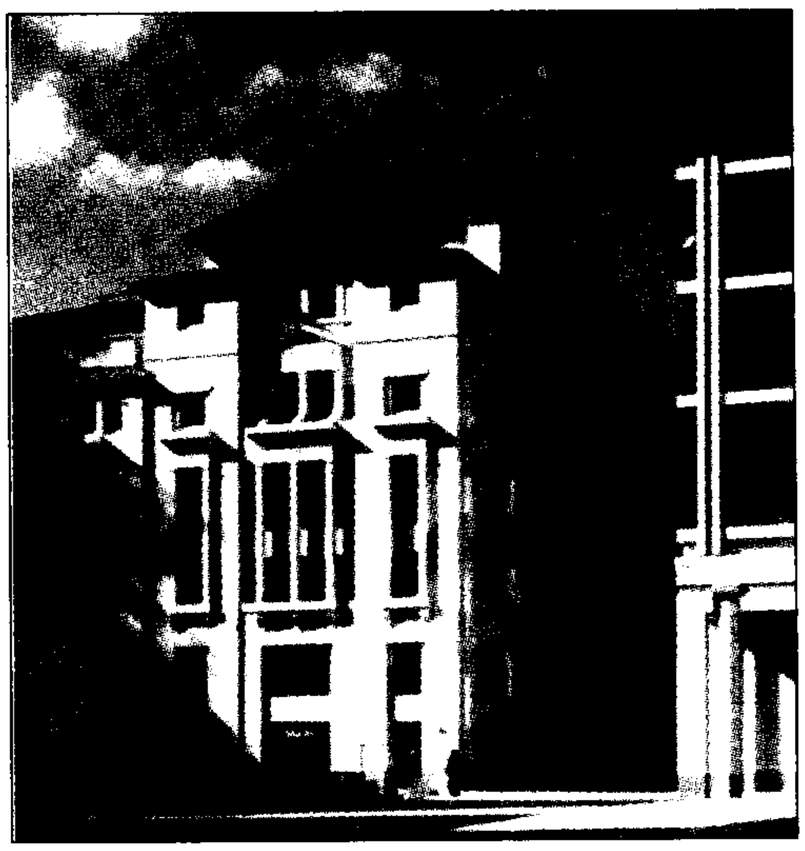
Kenneth Clark is profiled in *Lord Clark: Servant of Civilisation*
Radio 4, 2pm

The Times

NOOKS and CORNERS

"AFTER almost 300 years Sir Christopher finally gets the surroundings his masterpiece deserves" – or so say the advertisements filling some of the windows on the brand-new Juxon House.





It's a pity Wren couldn't wait a little longer for an appropriate setting for St Paul's Cathedral. As it is, after decades of controversy and farce, the redevelopment of the Paternoster Square area north of St Paul's is now complete (save for the sentimental and asinine gesture of dragging Wren's old Temple Bar out of honourable retirement at Theobald's Park and plonking it on an inauthentic site next to Wren's mature masterpiece so that each will make the other look ridiculous).

The modern story begins on the night of 29 December 1940, when incendiary bombs destroyed the bookshops and publishing houses in Paternoster Row. After the war, all the big names in planning debated how to redevelop the large and valuable cleared site next to St Paul's Churchyard. The *Architectural Review* argued that what was needed was not a grand, arid formal space but a modern design which recognised the English picturesque tradition. And that is what we got in the post-war development designed by William Holford (that smoothy who became, alas, merely the first ennobled architect).

Unfortunately, although his 1961 scheme permitted artful glimpses of Wren's cathedral, the buildings themselves – by the church commissioners' architects, Trehearne & Norman, Preston & Partners and completed in 1967 – were dreary and mediocre. Worst was Sudbury House, a tall block which blocked distant views of St Paul's from the north-west.

Redevelopment of these inadequate and unpopular blocks was mooted in 1984 and in 1987 a limited competition was held with all the usual modernist suspects: Rogers, Foster, Stirling, etc. It was won by Arup Associates. But then a young outsider staged a brilliant coup. Supported by the Prince of Wales (then taken seriously, at least about architecture), John Simpson proposed an alternative "traditional" or Classical scheme and seductive perspectives of a new Paternoster Square, complete with loggias and lots of columns, won public support. The Arup masterplan was soon dropped by the new owners of the site.

By 1991 Simpson was working with Terry Farrell and an American, Thomas Beeby, who proposed a new masterplan with the plots doled out to all the so-called New Classicists – Quinlan Terry *et al*. The result was a dense collection of over-elaborate Classical blocks like 1920s banks – the worst (by Booby) looking like Herbert Baker on a bad day. Although this scheme got planning permission in 1992, it was not viable or practicable and so faded away.

By 1996 the Mitsubishi Estates Corporation had become sole owner of the main part of the site and, at the suggestion of Stuart Lipton (yes, him), William Whitfield was brought in to salvage something from this mess and to get it built. Now Whitfield is both an intelligent pragmatist and one of the most interesting of post-war British architects. At Paternoster Square, he brought in some respected, pragmatic modernists, dumped poor John Simpson (*most* unfairly) and kept the best sites for himself, working with those puzzlingly successful nonentities, Sidell Gibson.

So what have we got? A decent urban street pattern: a new Paternoster Row and a properly narrow Canon's Alley focused on the North Transept – just like before the Blitz. Paternoster Square itself is an agreeable irregular arcaded space affording interesting views of St Paul's and the Deanery, with a fussy Corinthian column-cum-ventilating shaft in the centre (designed by Whitfield). The surrounding buildings are of reasonable scale (Sudbury House has gone: hooray!) in that reticent rectilinear manner in masonry – concrete, stone, brick – which is now standard commercial modern architecture.

The best by far is Eric Parry's abstract colonnaded block which is an artful grid of stone reminiscent of Italian Fascist architecture. Now I mean that as high praise, for Italian town planning schemes of the 1930s were modern, subtle, harmonious and *unpretentious*. We could do worse today – come back Piacentini: all is forgiven.

Which brings me to Whitfield's Juxon House. Oh dear, oh dear: what *did* he think he was doing? The plan is fine: it curves around St Paul's Churchyard and constricts the top of Ludgate Hill to create a proper picturesque effect (no, it does not "block" the view of Wren's West Front – like the former Juxon House, it sits on the ancient street line; it is the 1960s building behind, which Holford idiotically curved inwards, which makes Juxon House look as if it sticks out: demolish it, please). But why the squat Corinthian order? Why the upper order of square piers? Why the Tuscan attics *à la* Krier? Why the arbitrary arched recess on the concave front?

Whitfield's model may have been one of those sophisticated Edwardian Mannerist essays by Belcher and Joass, but the result is incoherent and crude. Oddly enough, as it is faced in "Techcrete" (pre-cast concrete cladding), the new Juxon House is uncannily like one of the post-modern monsters which line Ceausecu's Avenue of the Victory of Socialism in Bucharest.

My objection to Whitfield's swansong is not that it is (sort of) Classical, not that it is Not Modern, but merely that it is bad. But what should he have done? Wren made no designs for the surroundings of his cathedral as built – but Hawksmoor did, and he proposed simple, grand, arcaded buildings of brick with stone pilasters inspired by Inigo Jones's ranges in Covent Garden. A modern, unfussy version of that, in red brick, would surely approximate to what dear old Sir Christopher might still be waiting for, and deserve. As it is, we have an overdone embarrassing compromise, a dog's dinner, which well deserves the Hugh Casson Medal for 2003.

'Piloti'

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

And a very Happy New Year to all parishioners!

Ring out the old, ring in the new! But, hey, before you pull on those bell ropes, let's look at it a different way, shall we?

Instead of looking forward and making a lot of silly promises that we can't keep, let's look back at all the promises that we made in 2003 and that some of us *did* keep!

- Satan has been o'erthrown! (Promise kept!)
- Peace has been brought to the ancient lands of the Middle East! (Promise kept!)
- Those weapons of mass destruction have been found! (Promise kept, again!)*

I could go on all night. But I don't want to sound like one who "bloweth his own trumpet"! *(Book of Satchmo 7.3)*

So, I'm very happy to look back on a real "year of achievement"!

But I know there are some people who won't be so keen to look back on the past year.

Our treasurer Mr Brown, for example, with that embarrassing speech he made at the parish outing to the seaside!

Honestly, the bit where he suggested that he could do my job better than me was toe-curling, wasn't it?

The less said about it the better! But wasn't it terrible? And the fact that hardly anyone clapped, compared to the response when I made my own speech the next day, must have made him feel really foolish!

You know when you have a dream that you're standing up on a stage somewhere, in front of a whole crowd of people, and you suddenly realise that you haven't got any trousers on? That's how it must have been for poor Mr Brown, except that it was for real!

And talking about people with no trousers on, what about our former organist, Mr Cook?

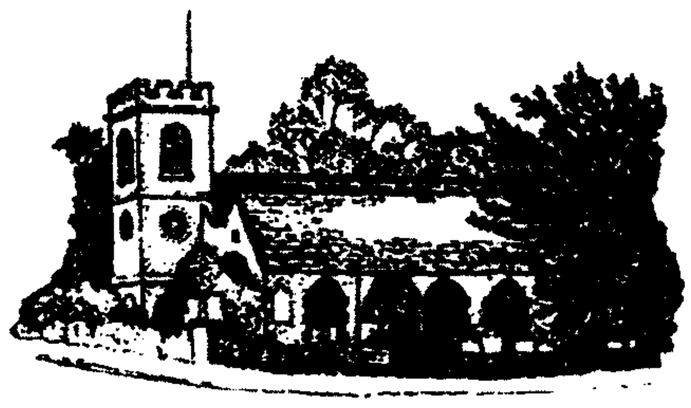
He resigned from the PCC on what he rather grandly called "a point of principle"!

And how embarrassed he must have felt when the Great Satan was finally tracked down, hiding away in a dirty hole in the ground, with a beard almost as silly and unnecessary as Mr Cook's own!

Yes, he's another one who won't be wanting a 'replay' of 2003 in a hurry!

And what about poor Mrs Short? I expect, with her sad history of alcoholism and mental instability, she'll be looking for some pretty expert counselling to help her when she looks back on a year of failure and treason!

She called me "reckless"! If I were very



unkind, I might even reply "better than being legless, Claire"! (But I won't because it's not my style!)

And talking of leglessness, I think we should all spare a thought this New Year for our former parish solicitor Mr Lairg!

There's yet another person in the parish who may wish to avert his gaze from what happened in the past 12 months (as he sits there clutching a glass of whisky with Mrs Dewar!).

And those are just some of the more prominent parishioners who've got a lot to forget as they look back on 2003!

But I'm not forgetting all those ordinary members of the congregation who took it upon themselves to march up and down the parish, holding up the traffic and shouting rude remarks about our good friend the Rev. Dubya of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons!

Rather a lot of you, weren't there? And I expect you're all feeling suitably contrite, now that what our friend the Rev. Dubya calls "evilitude" has been utterly cast down, and those "weapons" have been well and truly found, as I always prophesied!*

But the one I feel really sorry for is poor Mr Hutton who, despite everything that has happened, still seems determined to go on writing his laborious report on all sorts of things which, frankly, no one is interested in any more!

It is obviously very commendable that Mr Hutton feels obliged to carry on scribbling away at the report that I asked him to write, but he must now be looking back at the year and wondering why he wasted so much of his and everybody else's time!

So, when it comes to our first evensong of the New Year, let's join together in a special chorus I have written to celebrate my theme:

Ring in the old, ring out the new
That's the message for me and for you
Ring out the new, ring in the old
That's the message, so I'm told!

And a 'Happy Old Year' to all my readers!

Tony

*Exact details to follow at a future date. T.B.

Kidz Korner

★ I wonder how many of the children will recognise the latest star of the popular American TV series The Simpsons. Yes, it's your very own vicar – being watched by millions of people all over the world!

I don't mind admitting I was pretty excited to be asked to appear in the world's favourite TV show (and in my view, the best!). I know that some of the older members of the congregation may not have thought it was very dignifiied for their vicar to be confused "on the screen" with Mr Bean, who is an idiot who can never get anything right!

But of course it was only a joke! They knew perfectly well who I really was! And, anyway, Mr Bean is the most famous British person in America, where he is not looked on as funny at all!

Enjoy the rest of your holiday, kids, and don't watch too much telly!

Your vicar, Tony

COLOURING COMPETITION

★ Here is a picture of Mr Brown making his speech at our seaside outing. Colour his face with an appropriate crayon. Suggestions:

Red for embarrassment
Green for envy
Blue for depression
White for shock
Yellow for cowardice
Black for anger, etc

Send your drawings to Mr Brown, c/o The PCC! The winner will get a free outing to the Millennium Tent Winter Experience, where they can have a magical tour of the old fridges and burnt out Volvos that have become such an attraction in the parish.

THE PARABLE OF THE JOB HALF-DONE

There was once a man who started on a long journey and when he was halfway there, people asked him "St. Anthony, why haven't you finished your journey?" To which the saint replied, "Hey, I'm only halfway there. It would be pretty silly to give up now. Especially when there are so many things to finish that I haven't even started yet."

Are you one of those silly people who might have asked St. Anthony to stop halfway? Think about it. T.B.

'TODAY' LISTENERS' SHOCK POLL VOTE

by Our Media Staff **Peter Stringemupfellow**

THE LISTENERS of Radio Four's *Today* programme embarrassed the BBC by voting in favour of a new law that would allow householders the right to kill John Humphrys if he came uninvited into their home.

The new law was proposed by Chorleywood housewife Mrs Edwina Pierrepoint who said, "For too long we have lived in fear of waking up to find this awful man in our bedrooms with his intrusive questions and irritating interruptions. All citizens should have the right to shoot Humphrys dead."

The proposed law was supported by a staggering 93% of listeners, which left the BBC with no choice but to *(cont. p. 94 khz)*

Advertisement

I BELIEVE THAT EVERYONE HAS A RIGHT TO BE HAPPY, HEALTHY AND TO LIVE FOR EVER.

I DO NOT BELIEVE
THAT ONE MAN'S MEAT IS ANOTHER MAN'S POISON.

I BELIEVE
IN THE RIGHT OF EVERYONE TO BUY THEIR OWN FRIDGE.

I DO NOT BELIEVE
THAT ONE MAN'S EDUCATION GIVES ANOTHER MAN FLU.

I BELIEVE
THAT EVERYBODY SHOULD VOTE CONSERVATIVE.
VOTING LABOUR MAKES US ANGRY.

I CAN'T BELIEVE
IT IS NOT BUTTER.

I BELIEVE
IN THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT.

I DO NOT BELIEVE
THAT THE WORLD IS FLAT.

I BELIEVE
IN MIRACLES. WHERE YOU FROM, YOU SEXY THING?

I DO NOT *BELIEVE* IT.
(© V. MELDREW)

I BELIEVE
IN TRYING TO CON PEOPLE WITH A LOT OF HALF-BAKED ADVERTISING SLOGANS DRESSED-UP AS A PERSONAL CREED.

I BELIEVE
IN DRINKING BLOOD
(I THINK WE SHOULD LEAVE THIS ONE OUT, DON'T YOU? MAURICE SAATCHI)

Noel Coward
NOEL COWARD

EXCLUSIVE TO THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

AN APOLOGY

IN RECENT YEARS, we may have given the mistaken impression that BSE in cattle was a disease slightly more dangerous to human health than the Plague, SARS and the Black Death combined. A disease so serious that when it was detected in British cows we had no option but to place an immediate ban on all meat exports from Britain.

We now realise, in the light of an American cow contracting BSE, that nothing could be further from the truth, and that BSE is, in fact, no more serious than a tickly cough or a bunged-up nose and poses no threat whatsoever to humans. In fact, BSE is a disease so harmless that any suggestions that American beef exports should be banned as a result of it are plainly ridiculous.

We apologise for any confusion caused, and any confusion in the future when a cow on a farm in Hertfordshire starts wobbling and we immediately place a total ban on all imports of British beef to protect the health of... etc... etc... etc.

New Films

Sky High Noon

Action-packed remake of classic Western now starring Vin Diesel as Sky Marshall Matt Goodguy, the lone undercover lawman. His job is to keep the peace on Boeing 747 flights. But when a gang of villains ride into Economy Class and threaten to take over the plane, Matt Goodguy knows what to do. He fills the air with lead and shoots holes in the fuselage, causing the cabin to depressurise and the plane to crash into a major city.

From the novel idea by U.S. thriller-writer Donald Rumsfeld.

Cast In Full

Captain Collymore	Charles Dance
Chief Baddie	Art Malik
Chief Rolling News	Rageh Omaar
Man In Business Class	David Frost

(That's enough cast. Ed.)

Advertisement

NEW FROM GNOMENS

THE BASRA RANGE

Tony (actor, 52) is wearing the new casual winterbreak collection including:
✔ Open-necked Bush Ranger shirt in easy drip-dry Condoleezene.™
✔ The Hutton Jacket – Easy-to-wear stain resistant unbuttoned leisure top with comfortable Neocon lining.
✔ White-washed "Dossier" denim jeans with Crocodile-Tear Belt.
✔ Butt-kicker boots *(not pictured)*.

STRING UP THIS DOG!

The face of evil

Say Simon Heffer and Peter Hitchens
The Columnists You Can't Read

THE NATION has been shocked by the savage murder of a defenceless corgi by a ruthless bull terrier. No one is in any doubt as to the identity of this psychopathic serial killer.

Yet the do-gooders, the Guardian-readers and animal rights brigade are quick to tell us that Princess Anne's favourite dog is in need of help rather than the rope.

What utter nonsense! If these lettuce-eating weirdos had their way (assisted no doubt by the Archbishop of Canterbury and his gay friends), the only punishment for this murderer would be to be put up at the taxpayer's expense in luxury kennels for the rest of it's life, and be fed round-the-clock Winalot in between sessions with the kennel therapist.

And even then the killer pooch would be back on the streets in 18 months, and ready to kill again!

No! There is only one answer to this menace. Princess Anne's mad dog should be strung up at once, for it is the only language that such a killer canine can understand.

Bringing back the rope would send a long overdue message to every murdering mongrel in Britain.

Just imagine a land in which Rover, Patch and Fido can once again walk safely down the streets, without Her Royal Highness's psychotic pooch burying it's teeth in their necks just for the fun of it!

© Dacretrash Productions 2004

Daily Mail

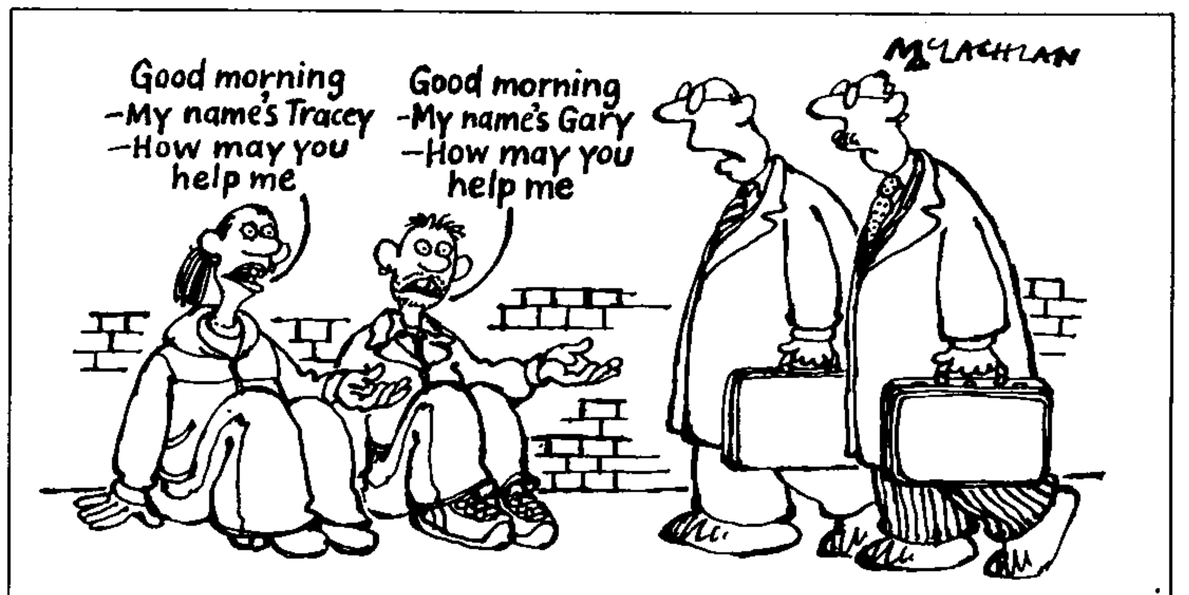
Has Christmas Become Too Commercial?

asks Max Hastings

EVERY YEAR it gets worse. The blatant attempt by cynical money-grubbers to make a quick buck out of what should be a religious festival makes me furious.

This year I noticed a particularly obvious attempt to cash in by a columnist writing in the Mail who could scarcely be bothered to conceal the fact that his only interest in Christmas was whether he could make £2,000 by writing a lazy why-oh-why piece about how commercial the *(cont. p. 94)*

Tomorrow: *Max Hastings asks "How bleeding is the obvious?"*



"More out-of-work call centre workers"

Media News

FURY OVER CHRISTMAS REPEATS

THOUSANDS of *Daily Mail* readers jammed the switchboard of Associated Newspapers last week to complain about the huge number of repeats in the paper over Christmas.

"It was a disgrace. I'd seen nearly all the articles before," stormed one *Mail* reader, Mr Brian Dead.

"That piece about BBC and ITV viewers being furious at the number of repeats on TV over Christmas was a straight repeat of the piece the *Mail* ran last year.

"And the double-page spread of half-naked middle-class women comparing bras looked exactly like the other spreads of half-naked women they run every single week. With so many repeats, the *Mail*'s a rip-off – especially if you compare it to the daily cost of a TV licence."

A *Mail* spokesman denied the paper was conning readers. "Strictly speaking these aren't repeats. They just give readers another chance to enjoy classic articles they know and love but may have missed, due to *(cont. p. 94)*

BBC LAUNCHES NEW CONTEST

IN THE wake of their contest to find the nation's favourite book and favourite sitcom, the BBC has now launched a contest to discover which BBC name the general public believes should be the scapegoat sacked in an attempt to stave off criticism of the BBC in the Hutton report.

Included in the short-list of fifty are such household names as Greg Dyke, Gavin Davies, Andrew Gilligan and Richard Sambrook.

Following the release of the Hutton report, the short-list of fifty will be narrowed down to just ten, and on January 19th Clive Anderson will announce the name of the person chosen via the public to be the corporation's scapegoat. They will then be sacked during a glittering presentation broadcast live from the Royal Albert Hall on BBC3.

BEAGLE: HOPE FADES

SCIENTISTS feared last night that pieces about Beagle could be lost for ever in the middle of the paper. "We might never see them again," said Professor Pillinger.

"It was all going so well when we launched Beagle onto the front page, but then interest started to fade and now it's disappeared completely. This is a tragedy, as Beagle may be the last science story ever to reach the Sun."

(Reuters)

WORRY OVER BINGE-DRINKING

RESEARCHERS say that TV soaps such as Eastenders and Coronation Street encourage binge drinking.

"We believe the reason for this is that downing a bottle of vodka a night is the only way viewers can stomach sitting through five episodes a week of these programmes," said professor... *(cont. p. 94)*

Those Serbian Election Results In Full

Nizdun (South)

Monsta Ravinodan Lunajtic
(Greater Serbian Coalition) **307,403**

Szlorta Maszmurdevic
(Serbian National Genocide Party) **208,107**

Moderav Reformovic
(Serbian Centrist Alliance) **3**

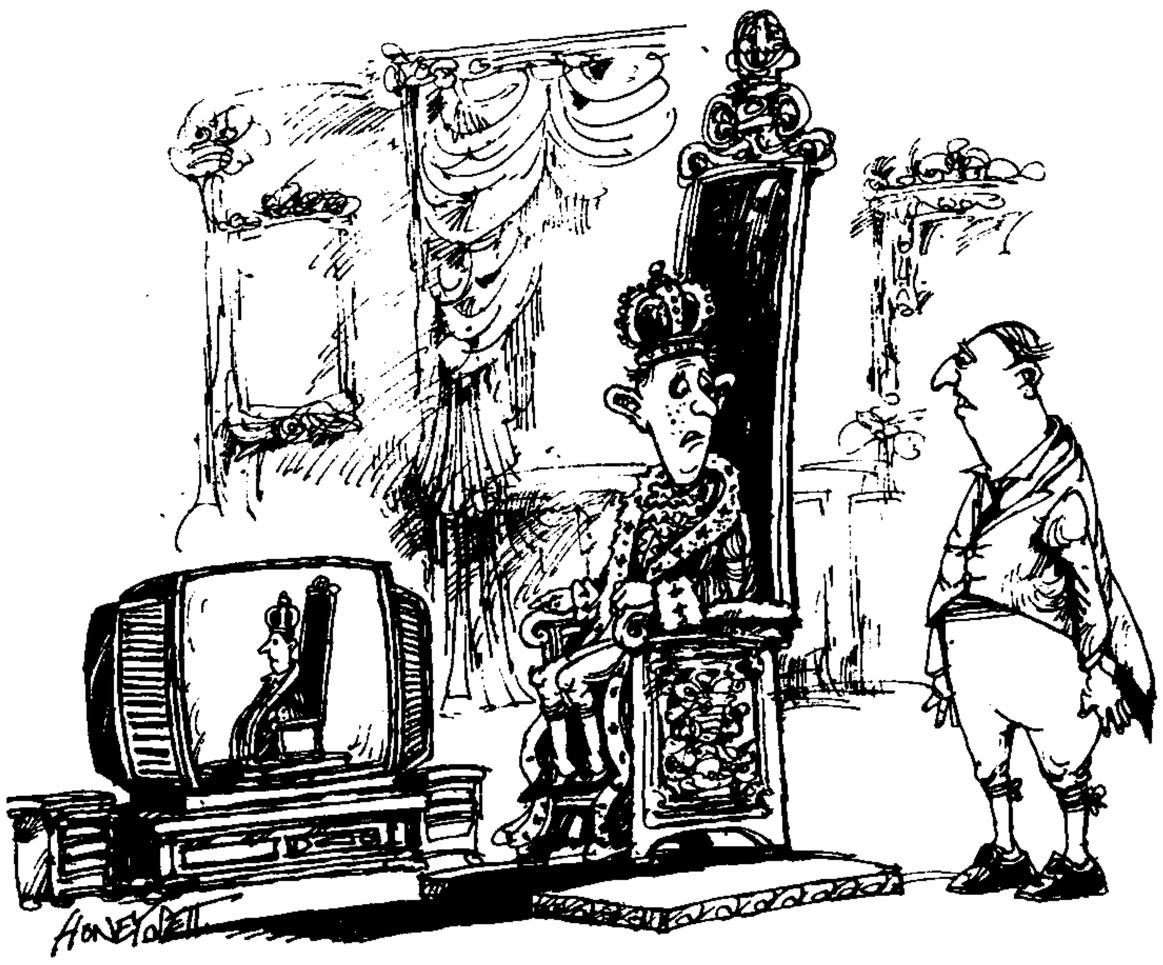
Result: *Gain for nobody.*

Daily Express

'QUEEN'S CORGI WAS ASSASSINATED' – SHOCK CLAIM

PHAROS, the late Royal corgi, was the victim of a deliberate murder plot orchestrated by the Duke of Edinburgh, claimed a leading businessman last night.

"It's fuggin' obvious," said Mr Mohammed Al Fayed, "the dog was getting too fuggin' popular, so the Duke of Edinburgh hired the fuggin' pit bull to chew its fuggin' face off. I demand a public fuggin' enquiry."



"I think I've already seen this training video"

TV ROUND-UP

Farewell to 'The Office'

by Our TV Staff **David Brent-East**

ONE OF Britain's best-loved comic characters *finally bowed* out over Christmas, after a two-year run, during which his absurd and embarrassing management style had rocketed him to the bottom of the polls.

The series starred Iain Duncan Cough as the gaffe-prone boss of Tory Central Office, whose attempts to inspire his down-trodden subordinates invariably ended in ignominious failure.

Viewers came to know some of the Offices's more improbable characters, such as Cough's dim-witted No. 2, Mike Ancram, the office prankster Ollie Letwin and the scarcely articulate receptionist Theresa May, constantly obsessed with her new shoes.

But the star of the show was unquestionably Cough himself, whose ability to get the wrong end of every stick and to say the wrong thing made him a national laughing stock, with a huge following (Sid and Boris Johnson).

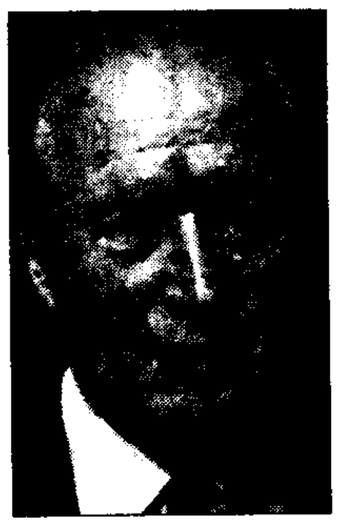
The climax of the series came earlier last year when Cough's behaviour became so impossible that he had to be fired, and replaced by a smarmy colleague.

In the special Christmas edition viewers saw the redundant Cough embarrassing himself and everyone else even further by turning up to the office party, only for his former colleagues to ignore him.

Curse of Gnome Strikes Down Lawyer

by Our Legal Staff **Joshua Rozenbeard**

THE legendary Curse of Gnome has struck again, I can reveal. This time the victim was the 89-year-old former solicitor, Peter Carter-Ruck, named in the Guinness Book Of Records as the world's richest libel lawyer.



Carter-Ruck, 102, had for years lived under the dreaded curse after his many legal actions against Private Eye magazine.

Yet, for all the precautions he took, the Curse caught up with him when he was struck down tragically early in his 107th year by a fatal attack of old age.

(Reuters)

Dear Sir,

Our attention has been drawn to the above article in which our client, myself, has been portrayed as a grasping and avaricious man whose sole motivation was the acquisition of huge quantities of money. This is prima facie a gross libel, the gravity of which is only compounded by it being true.

However, due to the fact that I am dead, and therefore technically non in positione suerensis, *my client is prepared to dispose of the matter on the following conditions:*

1. An apology in open court in terms to be dictated by myself.

2. The payment of a token sum in lieu of damages (£10 million).

3. The settlement in full of all my legal costs, amounting, shall we say, to a modest £25 million.

Yours, The Late P. Carter-Ruck, Beelzebub & Co,
Old Nick Street, Hades EC4

The Wit And Wisdom Of Britain's Greatest Stand-Up Lawyer

Q. Guess where I like to stay when I'm in London?
A. The Ritz! *(Writs)*

Q. What do you call a man who's sued Private Eye?
A. Rich! *(Wealthy)*

Q. What did the top libel lawyer call his daughter?
A. Sue! *(Legal term for issuing a writ)*

Q. What has Peter Carter-Ruck got in common with Tim Henman?
A. They've both made a lot of money in court! *(Tennis/Legal)*

Q. How many libel lawyers does it take to change a lightbulb?
A. Seventeen. One articled clerk to file request for lightbulb change (£50 an hour). Three para-legal secretaries to research lightbulb change procedures (£75 an hour). One approved competent person to inspect socket in accordance with Health & Safety Act 1974, as amended by EC Directive 90/270, as implemented by Changing of Lightbulbs in the Workplace Regulations 1994 (£150 an hour). Two junior partners to scrutinise above statutory instruments to ensure full compliance (£250 an hour). Two senior partners to review the firm's lightbulb policy over luncheon at the Garrick Club (£400 an hour). One finance director to receive submission of expenses claim from senior partners (£650 an hour). One Queen's Counsel to provide learned opinion on the arguments for and against the necessity of changing the bulb (£1000 an hour). One very senior partner (P. Carter-Ruck) to explain to client that due to circumstances beyond the firm's control it would be inadvisable to proceed with the matter of the lightbulb and that he had pleasure in enclosing his firm's charges (£50,000), which, under the terms of contract required immediate payment.

GADAFFI PROMISES TO DESTROY 'WEAPONS OF NON-EXISTENCE'

by Our Political Staff **W.M. Deedes**

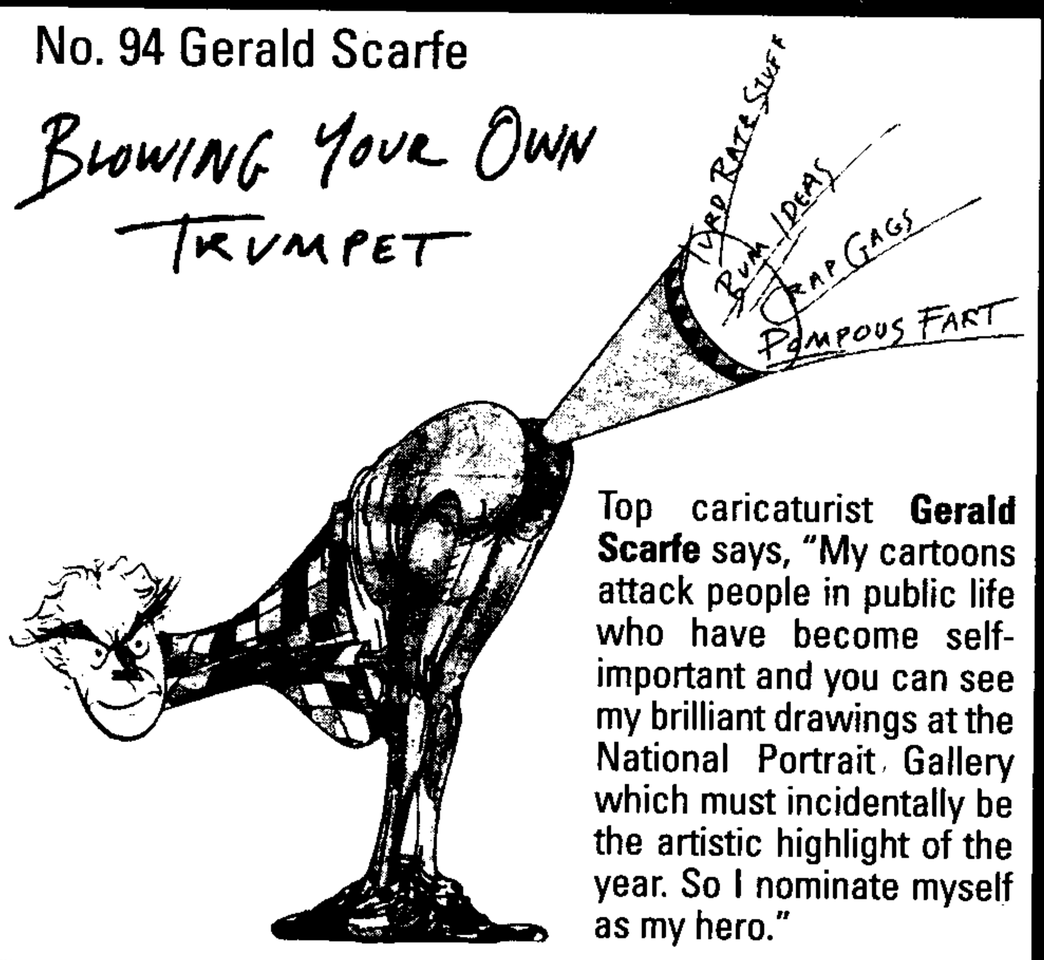
COLONEL GADAFFI, the Libyan leader, has announced that, as of today, he is going to get rid of all the weapons that he does not possess and cease manufacture of any more weapons of the type that he hasn't been making.

His decision was greeted as a breakthrough by western leaders. The British Prime Minister, in a specially convened television broadcast, told the nation, "This is an extraordinarily brave decision by Colonel Gadaffi and I salute his courage. For an Arab leader to volunteer to give up his Weapons of Non-Existence (WNE) sends a strong signal to the rest of the Middle East. And that message... *'the West will give you loads of money if you tell us what we want to hear'.*

"Amazing how many places have an integrated coffee shop these days"

HEROES & VILLAINS

No. 94 Gerald Scarfe



Top caricaturist **Gerald Scarfe** says, "My cartoons attack people in public life who have become self-important and you can see my brilliant drawings at the National Portrait Gallery which must incidentally be the artistic highlight of the year. So I nominate myself as my hero."

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DEPOSED LEADER 'REFUSES TO COOPERATE' WITH U.S. CAPTORS

by Our Man In Wall Street **D.O.W. Jones**

THE FEARED and hated former dictator of the Daily Telegraph, Lord Black, was last night reported to be "giving nothing away" to his American interrogators.

Hopes that Black would "sing like a canary" about the millions of dollars which had mysteriously disappeared in the closing days of his regime were dashed when the deposed dictator told his inquisitors, "I ain't sayin' nothing. My lawyer says I plead the Fifth."

Not In The Black

Black recently gave himself up when he was tracked down to a luxury apartment in New York, where he was found living only on champagne and caviare in conditions of appalling luxury.

Looking clean-shaven and pleased with himself, Black claimed that he had done nothing wrong and that his lavish lifestyle of private jets and jewel-bedecked wife *(surely 'palaces'? Ed)* were essential "tools of the trade" to the running of a great empire.

Hand In Till Eulenspiegel

While the majority of his erstwhile followers welcomed his arrest and downfall, a few pockets of resistance still remain loyal to Black.

They owe their positions to him and are fearful that, under a new regime, they would find themselves out on the street, begging their new leader "Dirty Desmond" for work writing captions to intimate portraits of Oriental young persons.

Said one 92-year-old veteran, "I have sheen sho many leadersh come and go that I can't remember who they all are, but if I am asked to write captions for Ashian Babesh, then sho be it."

Lord Deedes is 106.

THE COMMUTERS
I NEED TO CATCH A TRAIN TO BRISTOL FOR A MEETING ON TUESDAY...
CAN YOU ENVISAGE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THIS JOURNEY?
...I CAN SEE A BUS REPLACEMENT SERVICE
srizelda

Late News

PAUL BURRELL MEETING ON

PAUL BURRELL has today confirmed that Buckingham Palace has organised a meeting between him and senior representatives of the Royal family.

"This shows that the Queen has finally realised just how close I was to Princess Diana and that I truly am the keeper of her secrets," said the former Royal butler.

The Palace confirmed that Burrell is to meet Princess Anne's pit bulls Dottie and Florence in a private *(cont. p. 94)*

GLENDA SLAGG's Review Of The Year

■ **HATS OFF to my man of the year, top British boffin, Prof. Pillinger!?!?!!? OK, so his Beagle's disappeared down a hole on Mars! But that's the way we like our heroes – Captain Scott, Eddie the Eagle, Iain Duncan Smith and the guy who led the Charge of the Light Brigade, whoever he was! I say three cheers to the batty boffin from Bristol with the sexy sideburns!!!**

■ CAN'T WE GET anything right in this run-down Third World country, so-called Great Britain??!?! The trains don't work, the hospitals are overflowing, and now we can't even do a simple thing like land a dog on Mars!!!?! *(The Science Editor writes: it's not actually a dog.)* And no wonder, when you see hairy halfwit Prof. Pillinger, a-fiddlin' and a-diddlin' with his computers, just like Prof. Branestawm on a bad day!!!?!? Come off it, Prof. Pillock, and let Dr Who have a go!?!?!

■ *WANNA KNOW my Woman Of The Year?!?! S'obvious, isn't it – the sexy siren of the stove, Nigella, TV's raven-haired temptress of the tin-opener!!?!? OK, so you can't cook!!?!?? Who cares??!?! You're a dish even if your dishes aren't??!?? Geddit??!?!! No wonder you turned down an OBE!!! What an insult??!? You should be a Duchess at least – or even the Queen of Puddings??!?!! (No offence!!!?!!)*

■ **NIGELLA – arencha sick of her!???! We're certainly sick of her food!???! All together now – yuck!!??! Here's Auntie Glenda's recipe for a Nigella-free 2004 – Take one Nigella, whisk vigorously until she disappears, and reheat your old copy of 'Cooking With Delia'!!?!?!! Here's a gal whose recipes really are Delia-licious!!!?! Geddit???!**

■ DELIA SMITH!!!?! Who does she think she is, telling us how to boil an egg!!??! Give me Nigella any day!??! *(That's enough of this. Ed.)*

■ *HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Top 10 Raunchy Runners-Up for 2003*

● **TV's Andrew Marr** – He's marrrrrvellous, geddit???!?

● **Roman Abramovich** – I've scored plenty, big boy, fancy buying me???!

● **Jonny Wilkinson** – You won't have to 'try' very hard with me!!! (Geddit?????!)

● **Orlando Bloom, aka Legolas** – The sexy elf in Lord of the Rings. You can get your leg over this lass any day???!

● **Prof. Colin Blakemore** – Here's one crazy hot-blooded little animal who won't mind a bit of experimentation!!?!?

● **Justice Popplewell** – The sexy judge who just keeps a-poppin' up everywhere!!!?? (Geddit??!?)

● **Andy Gilchrist** – You can take me out for a £1,000 dinner any day and we'll have a right 'curry-on' !!!?! Geddit????!

● **Major-General Patrick Cordingley** – Radio's Mr Know-it-all!!?!?? I bet you've got a few weapons of mass destruction hidden up your trousers!!?!? Geddit???!?

● **Romano Prodi** – The EU's Mr Big!!?! Come round to my place and I'll give you a few directives!!!?!

● **David Aaronovitch** – The Guardian's Mr Sex. Crazy name, crazy column!!!

See ya around in 2004!!!

Byeeee!!!

Those Christmas Quiz Answers in Full

1. Kylie Minogue's bottom.

2. Jonny Wilkinson.

3. Donald Rumsfeld after hearing about the capture of Saddam Hussein.

4. Jonny Wilkinson.

5. (a) The EU; (b) Bananas; (c) 8,736 millimetres.

6. (a) Nigella Lawson; (b) Liz Hurley; (c) Kylie Minogue's bottom.

7. Jonny Wilkinson.

8. Mohamed Fayed. All the others are in prison.

9. (a) Geoffrey John; (b) Elton John; (c) Peter Mandelson.

10. Jonny Wilkinson.

11. Mr Snuffles is the name of Andrew Marr's pet guinea pig.

(That's enough quiz answers. Ed.)

Late News
CELEBRITY DOESN'T DIE OVER XMAS HOLIDAY

THE world of showbiz was in shock last night at the news that somebody off the telly was still alive at the start of the New Year. Tributes poured in from his colleagues who *(cont. p. 94)*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Alan Bates, actor

So. Farewell
Sir Alan Bates
Star of *Women*
In Love.

We remember you
Wrestling naked
With Oliver
Reed.

Apparently you were
A great actor
As well.

But sadly
I did not see you in any
Of your other
Roles.

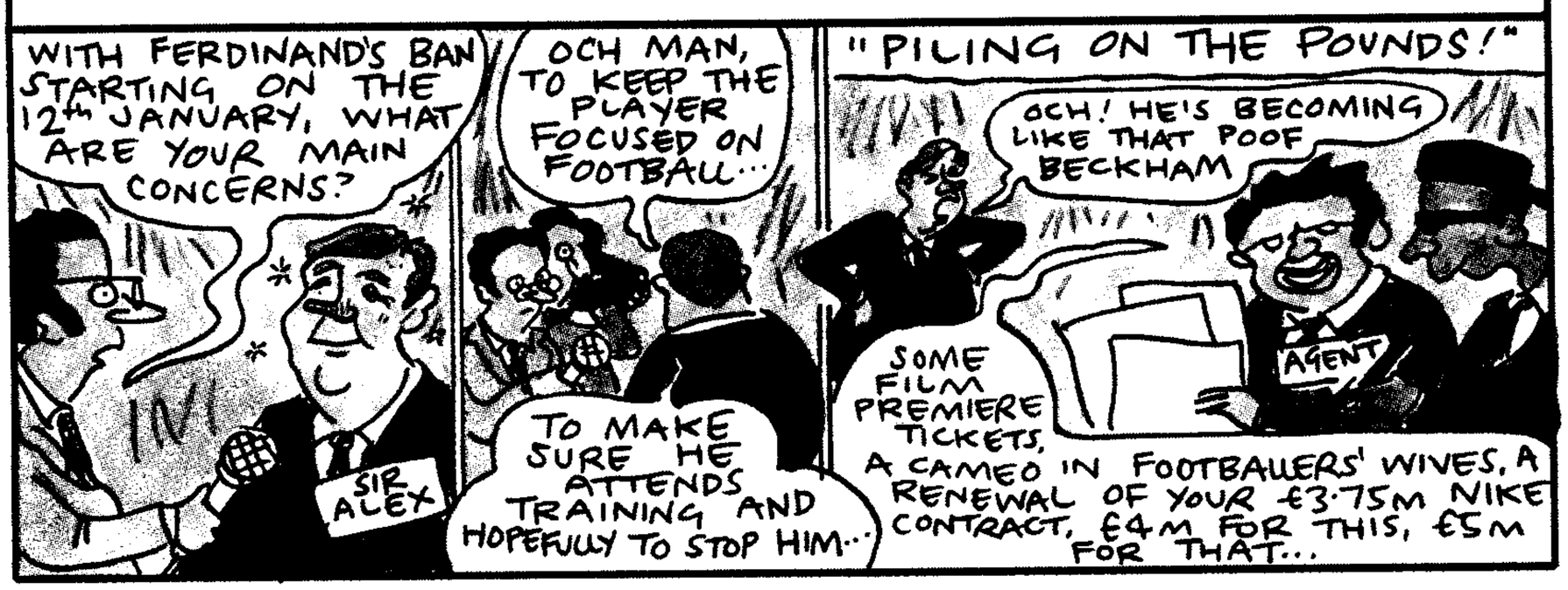
E.J. Thribb (17½)

THE mystery fan behind the takeover bid for Port Vale today said he will pull out of the deal if his identity is revealed.

It is understood Stone-based businessman Peter Jackson wants to remain anonymous until the contract is signed and sealed.

Staffordshire Sentinel

the PREMIERSH*TS


WITH FERDINAND'S BAN STARTING ON THE 12th JANUARY, WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN CONCERNS?
SIR ALEX
OCH MAN, TO KEEP THE PLAYER FOCUSED ON FOOTBALL...
TO MAKE SURE HE ATTENDS TRAINING AND HOPEFULLY TO STOP HIM...
"PILING ON THE POUNDS!"
OCH! HE'S BECOMING LIKE THAT POOF BECKHAM
AGENT
SOME FILM PREMIERE TICKETS, A CAMEO IN FOOTBALLERS' WIVES, A RENEWAL OF YOUR £3·75M NIKE CONTRACT, £4M FOR THIS, £5M FOR THAT...

Sir Frodo Baggins of Bagend (services to Saving Middle Earth)

Lord Fish of Hurricane (services to the Weather-Forecasting Industry)

Dame Michelle of Pop Idol (services to the Televisual and Musical Arts)

Dame Harold Evans (services to Pantomime)

(continued from page one)

Services to Pencil-Sharpener Manufacture in the Orkneys: L.P.Q. Voletrouser, Save The Stoat Charity (Solihull); Mrs M.L. Swatt, Anti-Smoking co-ordinator (Bracknell) Department of Health.

DVT (Colonial)

Rev. J.G. Sheepshagger, Rector of St Margaret's Port Stanley; C.F.P. Jobsworth, Kelp Safety Officer, South Georgia; Mrs P.G. Starborgling, Curator of the Sir Max Hastings Museum, Goose Green.

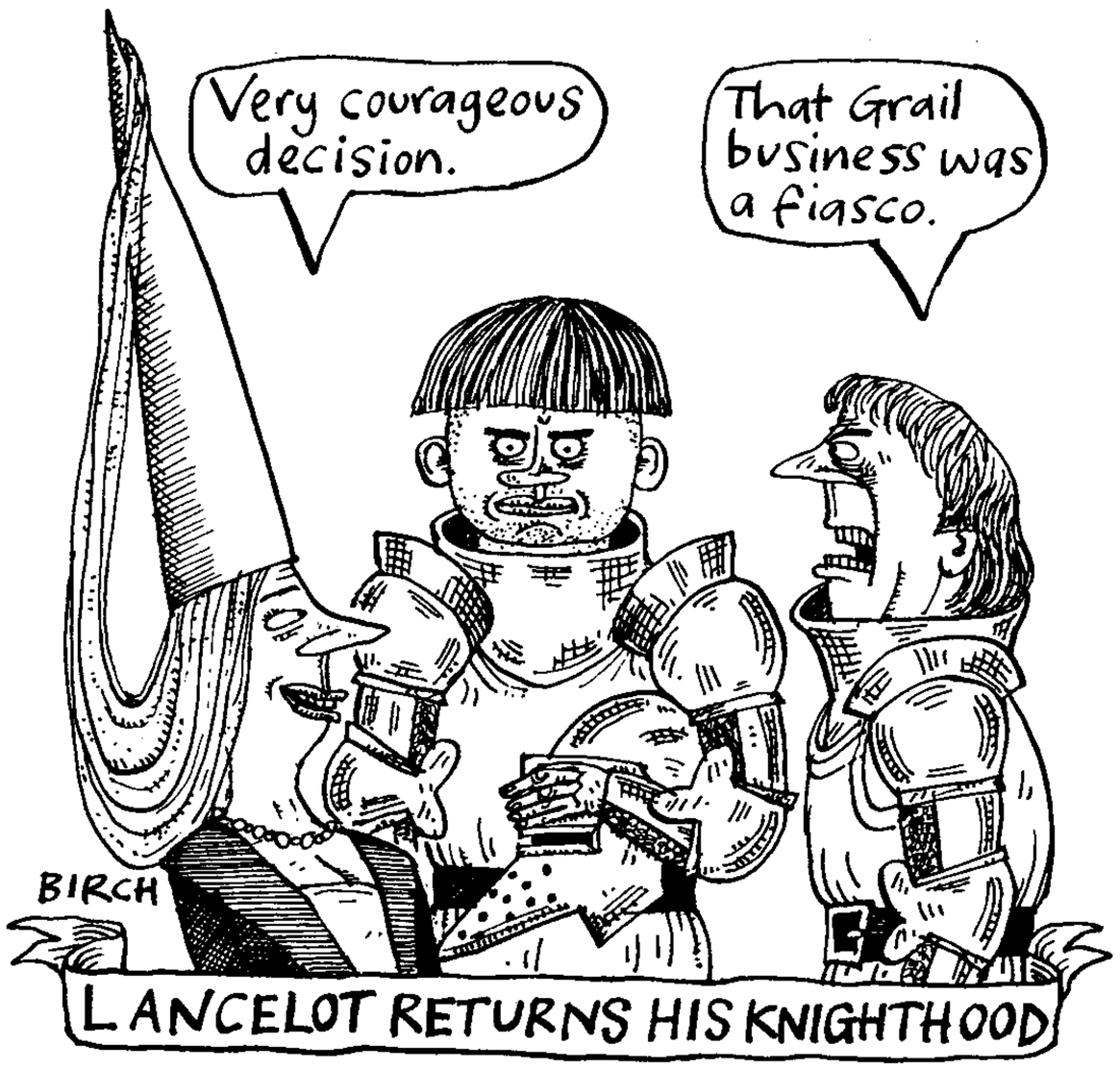
BSE (Civil)

R.P. Buggins (Min. Def and Dum), services to Ministry; J.L. Triplicate (Min. Pic and Mix) services to Ministry; J.J. Boxwallah-Hatterjee (Min. Wash 'n' Go) for services to ministry.

DVD (Royal)

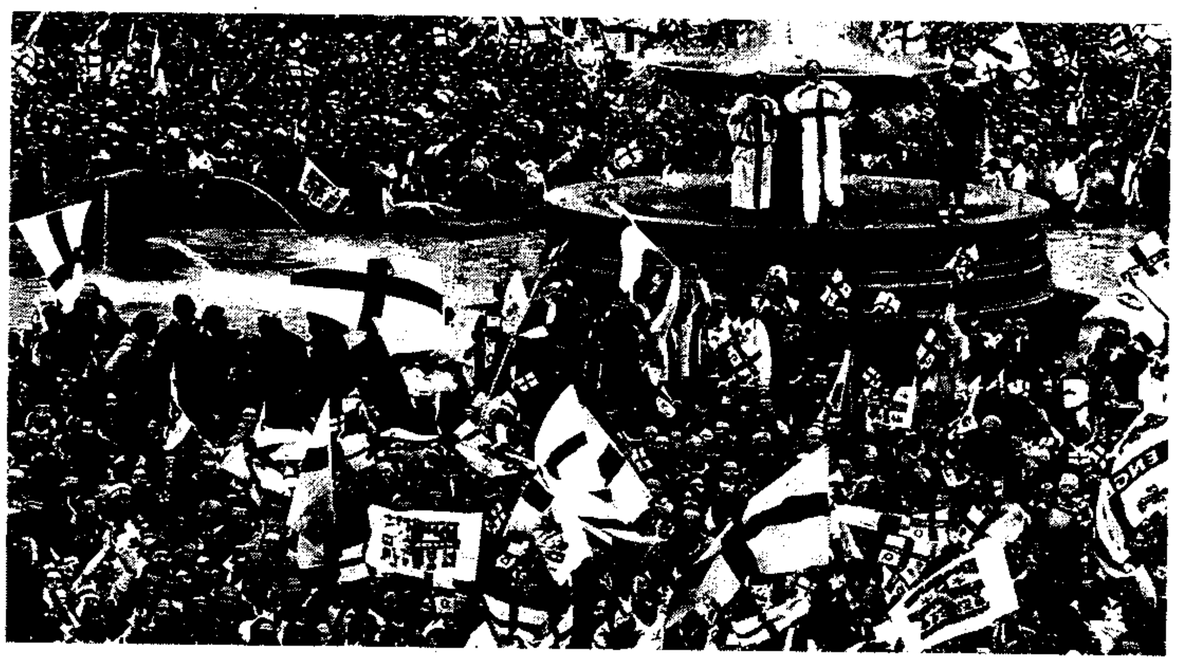
Sir Alan Fitztightly, Squeezer of the Royal Toothpaste (Prince of Wales) becomes Knight Commander of the Heron; Sir Crispin McQueen, Keeper of the Queen's Tupperware, becomes Lord In Ordinary of the Royal Raspberry; Dame Ethel Rotunda, Mistress of the Kennels becomes Grand High Vizier of the Ancient Order of the Spoon *(That's enough honours. Ed.)*

"Look at these old photos! All the blokes are wearing funny caps and identical clothes!"



MASS HONOURS FOR RUGBY

by Our New Year's Eve Staff



THE ENTIRE crowd of 750,000 supporters who turned out to salute the England rugby team in central London have been awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours list as a recognition of their part in the World Cup victory.

"It is only fitting that the role of the fans should be recognised," said a government spokesman. "Many of them had to bunk off work or play truant from school and that kind of commitment should be rewarded by the nation."

When asked if this was just a desperate attempt to get 750,000 votes, the spokesman said "Would you like to be Dame Holly of Day-Relief?"

LATE NEWS

THE rugby ball that Jonny Wilkinson kicked to win the Rugby World Cup for England is to receive a knighthood from the Queen.

A spokesman for the ball said "The ball is absolutely over the posts at the news."

Honour for LAFZ

THE *Daily Gnome*'s long-serving pocket cartoonist LAFZ (Brian Laffington) has been given a CBE for services to the arts,

Brian began drawing for the *Penny Post* in 1902 before becoming the illustrator of the gardening column in the *Sunday Courier* in 1927.

He joined the *Daily Gnome* in 1943 and has been here ever since, making us chuckle with his jokes about how voting Labour will bring down house prices in your area and may cause you cancer.

Said LAFZ, "It is a great honour for me – and of course for the *Daily Gnome*."

Well done, LAFZ!

SPOON

THIS WEEK

SIR SIMON JENKINS

Sir Simon...

Don't call me 'Sir'.

Mr Jenkins...

Look, it is *Sir* Simon, you know.

Sir Simon, thank you for taking part in our spoon questionnaire.

I'd like to make it clear that although some people think it is an honour to be asked to do this column, I myself have always thought it was rather degrading to answer questions about spoons.

So why have you agreed to do this interview?

I think it would be rather graceless to turn down the spoon offer when so many other worthy people from all walks of life have accepted it, so even though it is all nonsense, it is probably harmless enough in its way.

Yasmin Alibai-Brown agreed to do the column but then turned it down on the grounds that it trivialised serious cutlery issues. Had the same thought occurred to you?

As it happens, I have recently completed a book of Britain's 1000 Best Spoons and I would like to take the opportunity to mention this, as I believe it would be of great interest to your readers.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a knighthood?

No.

NEXT WEEK: Sir Tim Rice – *"Me And My Rice"*

This is the first in a four-match series, and if they continue in such sorry fashion there will not be undue surprise if they get beaten 5-0 – as they were on their last tour here in 1998-99.

Observer

DIARY

THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE'S CHATSWORTH COOKBOOK

My uncle Stiffy, who lived for a lightly-poached tongue, had strong views on food. "Never remove the gunk from a trotter before boiling it" he would say, whilst tending to a particularly troublesome toe-nail with a fine 16th century silver corkscrew, "There's oodles of nutrition in filth".

At Chatsworth, we take care to remember Uncle Stiffy's maxim whenever we boil a trotter. This is what makes this receipt so particularly tasty.

TROTTER ON HORSEBACK
1 pig's trotter
2 onions
2pts water
2 slices "Mother's Pride"

Do make sure your pig is completely dead before removing its trotter. Great Aunt Squinty forgot, and lost an eye as a consequence. Thankfully, the eye boiled up well, and made an interesting addition to the fruit salad we served on Coronation Day. Waste not, want not, as our old Governess used to say.

If ever she came across a dead insect – a bluebottle or wasp – she would never dream of throwing it away. After all, what is a Lemon Curd without insects?

First. discard the onions. You will not be needing them for this receipt.

Now boil the trotter in the water for 10-15 minutes, but not a second longer. It should remain nice and chewy, with that delicious trottery flavour.

Wrap it in the two slices of Mother's Pride, buttered to taste. Serve warm-ish. Ideal for a late breakfast, or perchance as that "little something extra" for afternoon tea.

My husband Andrew is easy to feed, thank goodness, and seldom complains about what is put before him. On Shrove Tuesday last year, he polished off one of our new table-mats under the impression it was one of chef's pancake efforts.

Unlike me, Andrew is a terrific pudding person. He also particularly loves what people on television will insist upon calling "seafood". This dish succesfully combines his two great passions!

JELLYFISH CUSTARD
1 small to medium Jellyfish
2 pints water
Custard, preferably from milk fresh from your own herd

Bring the water to the boil. Chef will show you how. Now plop the jellyfish into it.

Boil for ten-to-fifteen minutes, until it has stopped wriggling.

Dollop your lovely fresh custard all over it.

Serve with either freshly-baked crackers or a crisp garden salad, depending on season.

My sister Diana was a great judge of mousse. Diana and her husband Oswald, who was a huge success in politics, would always serve a liver mousse to start a meal, and often a fruit or cheese mousse to close it. Diana always said that the secret of the perfect mousse was to find the very best mousse chef and leave him be. Incidentally, she always insisted that the second 's' in mousse remained silent, and would grow simply livid if any of her guests' lingered a moment too long on their s's.

This particular mousse receipt is named after a dear old friend of Diana's from the pre-war years. How very long ago it all seems now!

MOUSSE DE ADOLF
7 hard-boiled eggs
7 fl.oz double cream
¾ pint mayonnaise
2 tablespoons dry vermouth

Stir the mixture with a spoon for a minute or two, then pass it over to chef, who will know what to do.

Diana always used to say that for all his faults, Adolf always left his plate spotless, particularly when his favourite mousse was being served. It is all too easy to criticise him, and in many ways he was far from pleasant, but this is the sort of thing chefs really appreciate.

I sometimes wonder what happened to good manners. Nowadays, a good many visitors to Chatsworth seem content to leave gubbins on the side of their plate. Of course, an ingenious chef can always think of a way of re-using these gubbins in a stew or "hot-pot", but that is not the point. There is no excuse for a messy plate.

Lady Blanche lived in Dieppe for the sake of economy. Aunt Natty, as my parents called her, had strong views on French food, and would insist that on all her meals being cooked in England, then sent over by ferry.

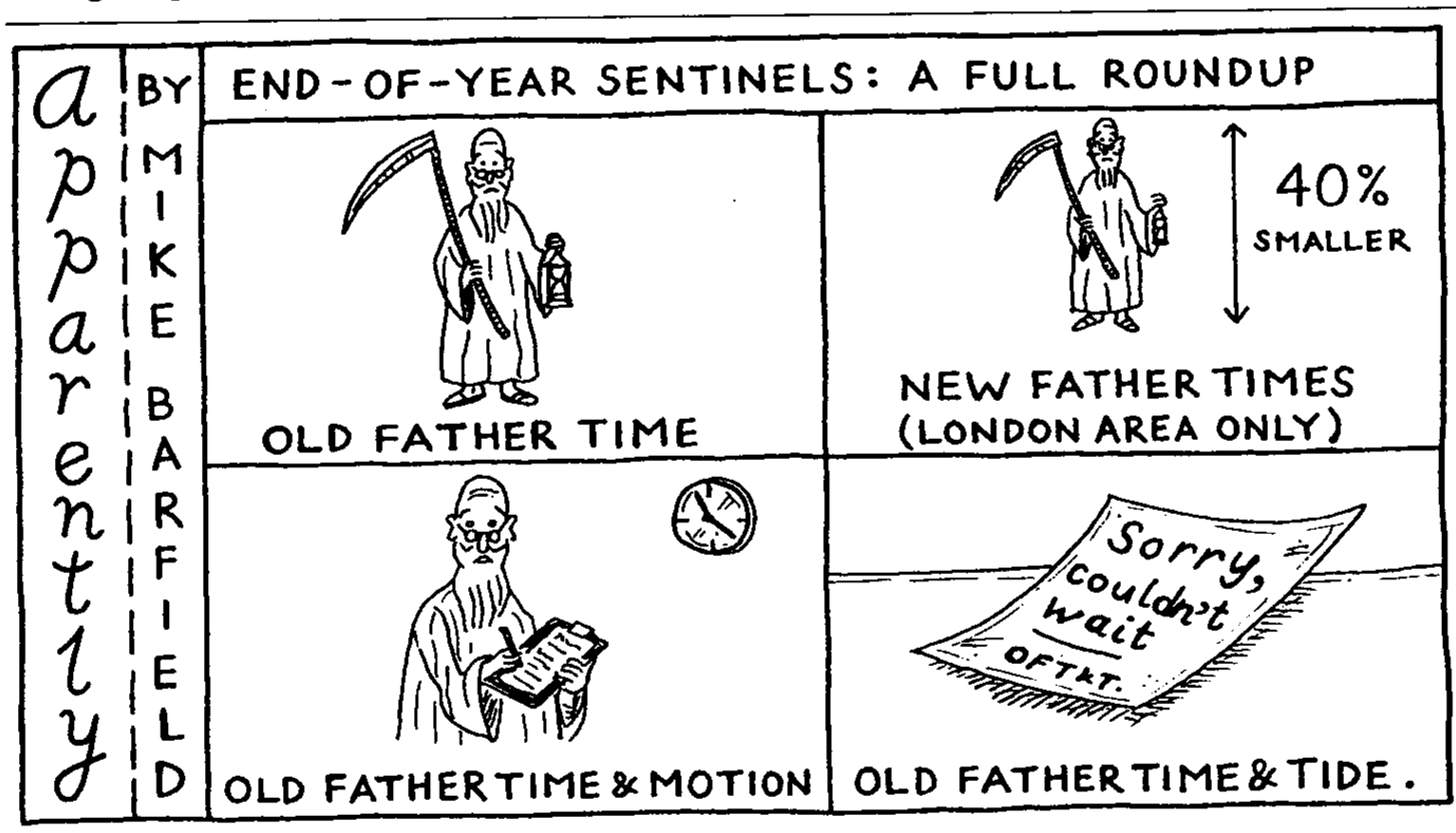
This caused her dinner parties to be beset by delays. If one were invited to luncheon on Friday, one could not expect the principal dish to arrive at the earliest before dinner on Sunday.

LADY BLANCHE'S FISH PIE
1 Tin Sardines
Mashed potato

Ask a willing hand to open the tin of sardines for you. Now place the contents in a serving dish. I have noticed over the years that some guests enjoy crunching on the backbone of a tinned sardine, while others do not. One can always remove the backbones from the general mix. Threaded together and painted in lovely deep blues and reds, they make a most attractive table decoration.

Spoon the mashed potato over the top of the sardines and scatter with eggs from the garden. Aunt Natty would always insist on wearing flippers and a snorkel, saying it was the only way to eat fish pie, but sadly in the present day many people have lost the knack of eating in snorkels, and the fashion now is to eat without.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN



■ **Peter Bottomley,** MP, the former Tory Road Safety Minister, has been banned from driving for six months after clocking up his fourth speeding offence in two years. Mr Bottomley was vice-chairman of the All-Parliamentary Group for Justice for Road Traffic Victims until last week.

The Times

Drugs runner hid crack in his pants

Southend Evening Echo

Literary Review

The People's Choice

FORGET the celebrity love-in of *The Big Read* and the three-month hype-frenzy of the Booker. What did people really read, or at any rate buy, in 2003?

Some of the answers can be found in Alex Hamilton's yearly analysis of the UK's "paperback fastsellers", traditionally laid out over two pages of the *Guardian* in the last week of the year. At Number 1 *Dr Atkins' New Diet Revolution*, with combined home and export sales of 1,145,713. At 100, Maggie O'Farrell's *My Lover's Lover*, with 175,553 ditto. In between, a great many deeply depressing statistics on both the general health of the domestic book trade and the whereabouts of that ever more elusive animal, the public taste.

Some points to note. First, and wholly predictably, of the hundred spanking tomes on proud display, covering every genre from fiction, biography, "diet", and a somewhat curious sub-genre graced only by Jilly Cooper and Danielle Steel known as "women's lit", maybe eight fell into the category of "books which it is possible to respect". Second is the curiously ageless quality of the proceedings. The likes of Tony Parsons (Number 8 with *Man and Wife*) and Ben Elton (17 with *High Society*) may come and go, but to cast one's eye down the list is to be confronted by the hoariest file of ancient book-trade spectres — Ken Follett, Jackie Collins, Stephen King, Tom Clancy — all still with us (with the exception of the recently deceased Robert Ludlum and the about to retire Maeve Binchy), all plainly intending to stick around for a very long time. How doggedly these loyalties endure — even Lord Archer, on whom most pundits gave up years ago, has managed to shift nearly 300,000 copies of *Sons of Fortune* in a bare two months!

Third point. The Hamilton list confirms all one's worst suspicions about a concentration of sales, money and marketing spin at the summit of the heap. Hamilton himself notes that his 100th book sold 9,000 more copies than its 2002 equivalent, and that he could happily have compiled a B list of the further hundred titles that sold in excess of 100,000. The big books by people you've heard of are selling more than ever, and the little books by people you haven't heard of selling even fewer.

Not that these sales are translating into profit, as publishers continue to chuck money away in the pursuit of turnover. The gross sales figures printed alongside each of Hamilton's starring titles are completely meaningless as they take no account of the savage discounts extracted by the big book retailers and, above all, by the supermarkets. As one resigned CEO put it: "If you want to get your author to number one you've got to play with Tesco and Asda."

And what about the people who don't want to play? Of the Hamilton hot one hundred, 95 came from the corporate assembly lines of HarperCollins, Random House, Time Warner, Pan Macmillan *et al*, a mere five from anything that could be described as "independent" (Faber, Bloomsbury and Canongate). Happily the occasional maverick (this year's garland goes to Alexander McCall Smith with *The No.1 Ladies Detective Agency* and *Tears of the Giraffe*, numbers 10 and 58 respectively) still rises to disturb the general torpor.

Forecasts for the next year or two? One, as demonstrated by this year's Booker, in which Birmingham's Tindal Street Press ended up on the shortlist, serious fiction is increasingly moving out of the orbit of big serious publishers who can't be bothered to market it. Two, publishers really ought to start worrying more about the vulnerability of their position, uncomfortably squeezed between the means of production (writers and agents) and the means of distribution (Waterstones, Asda and co) each of which has the edge over them in terms of power and influence. As any fule kno, high sales mean nothing if trailed by poor margins. And the only people who make money out of selling books in supermarkets are supermarket owners.

Publish and be dumbed

SO WHICH non-books did you get this Christmas? Here are a few of this season's non-est.

***What Not To Wear 2* by Trinny Woodall and Susannah Constantine (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.99).**

Thesis: Bed-tempered TV trouts follow up last year's bestseller with unnecessary sequel. Theme this time: what to wear for every situation, including PTA meeting, job interview, après ski and (most abject of all) school play. Bad clothes illustrated by trouts pulling unhappy faces; good clothes validated by huge smiles.

It's a book for: people who dress badly; people who think everyone else dresses badly; the insecure; the suicidally uncertain.

New for 2004: What Not To Wear 3, with the same photos/ideas/advice as last year. But will anyone notice?

***How Clean Is Your House?* by Kim Woodburn and Aggie Mackenzie (Penguin/Michael Joseph, £12.99)**

Thesis: This year's Trinny and Tranny, complete with traditional S&M implements, rubber gloves and feather duster. "There's no surface Kim won't tackle and nary a nook that Aggie won't investigate," says the blurb with a chuckle. Apparently they are on a "mission to clean up Britain." Well, clean up, certainly. As it is, this may be one of the most pathetic non-books ever published. Saddest section head? How Clean Is Your TV?

It's a book for: people who have very clean houses already. For anyone else it's an insult. If you get it for Christmas, cover it in Marmite and egg yolk and return to sender.

New for 2004: thousands more pisspoor ideas sold to Channel 4 by Daisy Goodwin.

***Private* by Alison Jackson (Penguin/Michael Joseph, £14.99)**

Thesis: Faked photos of celebs in rib-tickling situations (Blairs in swimming pool, Camilla Parker-Bowles in altogether). Explains Jackson: "In my work I use celebrity lookalikes to create images which pose fundamental questions about where the truth ends and lies begin." There's nothing funnier in the book than that sentence.

It's a book for: people who really, really don't like reading (no words at all after the introduction); all the celebrities lampooned; thickies who see the picture of "David Beckham" on the front and think it's his autobiography.

New for 2004: real photos of Camilla Parker-Bowles in the altogether.

***England's Thousand Best Houses* by Simon Jenkins (Penguin/Allen Lane, £30)**

Thesis: Underemployed pundit follows up previous non-book, *England's Thousand Best Churches*, with worthy breezeblock full of colour photos. Work clearly a labour of love, the love being that of, er, money. "Is Keble lovely or is it not?" Jenkins asks, desperately. "The upstairs drawing room has more Rococo plasterwork," he writes elsewhere, about 43 times. Hard to believe that so eminent a journalist should have come to this.

It's a book for: people who really don't like reading; people who would like to be the Duke of Something; people who are the Duke of Something; the envious; the aggrieved.

New for 2004: England's Thousand Best Telephone Boxes; England's Hundred Best Motorway Service Stations; England's Ten Best former editors of the *Times*.

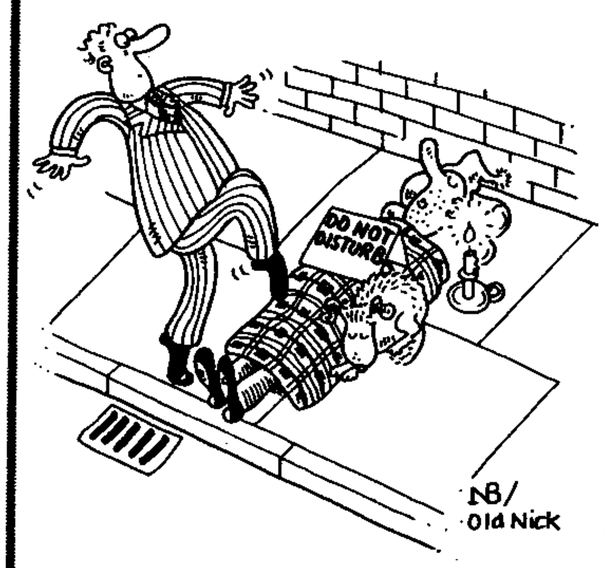
***The Pedant In the Kitchen* by Julian Barnes (Atlantic, £9.99)**

Thesis: Famous novelist writes one-joke whimsical column in the *Guardian* about not being a very imaginative cook. Columns not quite enough to bulk out into a book, so they do it anyway. Only 136 small pages long, but has arty graphic of wooden spoon on back cover.

It's a book for: almost no one at all. Cookbook fans won't see the point (no pictures of food); Barnes fans won't be fooled.

New for 2004: Ian McEwan's book about what not to wear; Martin Amis's gardening tips; How Clean Is Your House? 2 by Graham Swift.

MODERN NURSERY RHYMES



Wee Willie Winkie shuffled through the town,

Through the busy shopping streets in his tattered gown,

Accosting strangers threateningly with his begging bowl,

Then crashed out in a doorway in his blanket roll.

Books & Bookmen

■ A LATE entry for the 2003 Jeanette Winterson Award for Literary Modesty comes from children's author Anthony Horowitz.

In his list of Top 10 children's books published in the *Independent* just prior to Christmas, he felt compelled to recommend *Stormbreaker* by one A. Horowitz.

Admittedly Horowitz was modest enough to rank his own oeuvre at No 10 in the list. That, however, didn't stop him from noting that Alex Rider, the hero, "seems to appeal in particular to children who wouldn't normally read, and he now has a following in more than 20 countries. The books are fast-paced and full of adventure."

Though you say so yourself...

■ THE "shop" section of the Conservative party website (www.conservatives.com) gives an interesting insight into the reading preferences of members.

Here you can purchase works by such eminent political thinkers as Margaret Thatcher (a signed copy of *Statecraft*, £9.99), Winston Churchill (Selected Speeches on CD, £19.99) and, er, convicted murderer Tony Martin, who was cheered to the rafters when he appeared at the Tory conference last October.

Martin's autobiography, *A Right To Kill?* already features in the party's "bestsellers" list, despite the fact that it is not even published until the end of February. What a wonderful advert for the caring, compassionate Conservatism epitomised by prospective candidate Iain Dale, the openly gay bookshop owner who runs the site!

■ THE travails of author and fading press baron Conrad Black are causing problems for some of his staff.

Telegraph City editor Neil Collins has had to tread a difficult path since Black was forced to resign – or "retire" as Collins put it so delicately – from the paper's parent company last year. In a light-hearted gift guide which he penned for the paper on Christmas Eve, Collins recommended as his book of the year *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Champion of Freedom*. Tactfully, he omitted to mention that it was written by Black.

■ CHRISTMAS brought an extra round of gifts to several plaintiffs in what seems to be the never-ending series of libel actions concerning Sean McPhilemy's book *The Committee: Political Assasination in Northern Ireland*, the follow-up to his notorious Channel 4 documentary in 1991 (see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*).

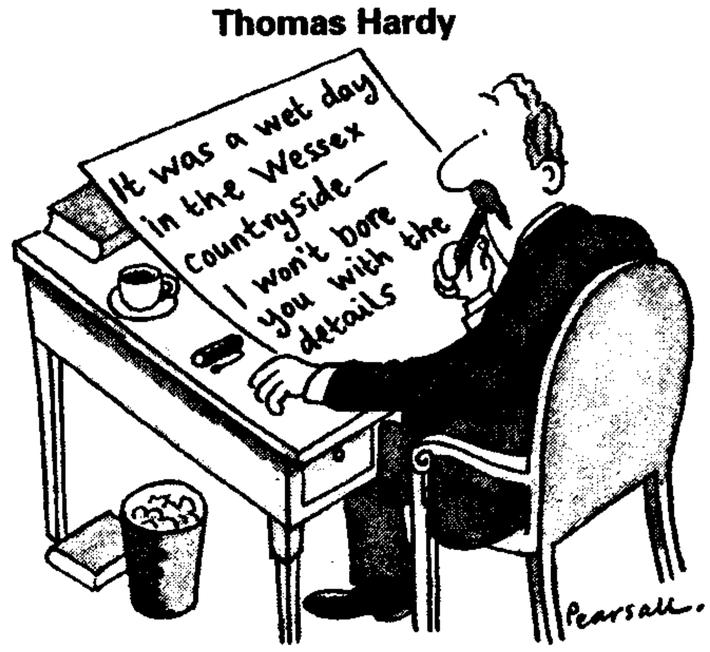
Seven retired RUC officers received an apology and settlement in the Belfast high court from internet bookshop amazon.com, which had made the book available in the UK despite the fact that it had only been published in America, where libel laws are considerably more lax. Back in March 2002 Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble received a similar payout from Amazon over false accusations in the book which linked him to several murders in the province, including that of Pat Finucane.

Three years ago McPhilemy was celebrating his own libel victory over the *Sunday Times*, who paid him £145,000 in damages after claiming that his original documentary was a hoax. But that victory has now been tempered by two other apologies and payouts last month, to *Sunday Times* hacks Liam Clarke and Barry Penrose, who worked on the original story. Meanwhile Amazon, which last August faced down a tabloid campaign to ban books about paedophilia because "it is censorship to make a book unavailable", has agreed not to sell McPhilemy's tome any more.

'Bookworm'

First Drafts

Thomas Hardy



Warballs

"Who should lead the rebuilding of Iraq? Join our panel and register to win a new convertible!" — InternetSurveyPanel.com.

"I remember when that *Vogue* issue was published quite clearly, there was so much sadness and fear around. The war with Iraq was a few weeks old and the Iraqi people had just demolished the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad's Shahid Square... I've always been a Bowie fan and that *Vogue* cover [a model with an 'Aladdin Sane' flash on her face] was clever and iconic – a showcase for all the innovative, creative talent in this country and an arresting image in a time of such misery." — Sarah Doukas, *The Times*.

"The capture of Saddam Hussein could help to make the current holiday sales season the strongest in years for restaurants, a leading industry economist said yesterday." — restaurantbiz.com

Number crunching

£1,000,000

■ Amount publishers are reportedly prepared to pay Alastair Campbell for his memoirs following David Kelly affair

£250,000

■ Amount publishers are reportedly prepared to pay Andrew Gilligan for his memoirs following David Kelly affair

£60,000

■ Pension David Kelly thought was at risk when he committed suicide

Pseuds Corner

Fairy cakes. The *fons et origo* of my cupcake passion.

NIGELLA LAWSON
Sainsbury's Magazine

BLOCK TOY designed with dreams and creation to encourage the sense of infantry's [sic] color and formativeness... The new blocks added with a sense of mysterious labyrinth to the conventional toys of aesthetic sense that the powers of thinking, formativeness and imagination are develop unconsciously through infantry's [sic] visual sense.

Found on packaging of "My First Rolling Labyrinth" children's toy

So much of our "common" knowledge of music in nineteenth-century Britain is bound up with received attitudes. The modern musicologist working in this field contends not only with the hermeneutical contextualization of contemporary writings, but also with undoing the often undiscriminating evaluatory processes of later and more modern generations of scholars. In some instances the historiographical calculus is so soritical that groundwork revision becomes a primary necessity. In other cases, despite a façade of impartiality, one detects some trace apologetic, be it aesthetic, theological, political or otherwise. Given either situation, however, there exists the fundamental need to reassess the work of the period, as well as the work about the period, and in addition to explore areas of the topic which have hitherto remained unknown. The current series of Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain is designed to fill these lacunae.

Music Studies 2004 catalogue

Saddam was a one year old in nappies on the only previous occasion Rangers met Hartlepool – and by the end of Saturday's clash, there was no doubting which of the two was looking tired and dishevelled and ready to crawl back into a hole.

Indeed, Rangers are giving the impression of being an occupying power in an impoverished alien land far from their natural home in the top two divisions.

They have already flushed out several insurgents like Plymouth and Sheffield Wednesday – and the partisans of Brentford – and are starting to encounter only weak sporadic resistance.

YANN TEAR reporting on QPR's victory over Hartlepool, Ealing Gazette

Pseuds Corporate

Our commitment to hard work and uncompromising service is well known and justifies a clientelle [sic] which, on any view, is the highest value private group (which is everything except Plcs) in the country... We are conscious of the need for measured expansion and this was part of the rational [sic] for our recent relocation. This is not in any sense a financial issue but a recognition that we genuinely need a larger base. Not to "offer our clients the benefit of the obvious sinergy [sic] and greater general expertise which will inevitably enforce our commitment and reinforce our ability to continue with the quality service for which we are rightly renowned in the market place" but to enable some of us to take the odd weekend off. We are also conscious of succession issues *[continues in this vein]*

Job advertisement placed by Julian Holy Solicitors, The Lawyer

CONTRIBUTORS: Paul Rouse, Paul Gibbs, Peter Willis, A.M. Hill, Nick Long-Miller.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

AMEY: DOWN THE TUBE

GRANT THORNTON UK, the giant accountancy firm, issued a long press statement two days before Christmas distancing itself from the great multi-billion Parmalat scandal, already dubbed the Enron of 2003/4.

The statement assured its readers that the British arm of Grant Thornton was not auditor to Parmalat or any of its subsidiaries. Another Grant Thornton firm had audited the controversial Cayman Islands subsidiary of Parmalat, the Bonlat Financing Corporation, and 17 other Parmalat subsidiaries; so Grant Thornton people had been in touch with the prosecutor's office in Milan, which is grappling with the enormous and complex Parmalat fraud.

On New Year's Eve two Grant Thornton executives in Italy were arrested along with top people from Parmalat. But a note to the press release makes it clear that just because one firm calls itself Grant Thornton does not make Grant Thornton firms elsewhere responsible for what goes on there. Indeed, in the highest tradition of international accountancy, each firm is independent of the other, and if anything goes wrong in one Grant Thornton firm, no blame attaches to any other.

This complete lack of accountability for the Parmalat fraud must come as a great relief to Grant Thornton UK partners who are having to grapple with another scandal involving their client Amey, one of "new" Labour's favourite PFI firms.

The *Eye* has carefully traced Amey's dismal record over the last three years, in which it stumbled from the verge of the Footsie list of top firms to near bankruptcy and an ignominious take-over by a Spanish builder. Serious questions about Amey's collapse have yet to be answered by its depleted board – and by its auditor, Grant Thornton UK.

Top of the list is the mystery of how the firm managed to create the illusion, in a presentation to analysts, of a £55m profit in 2001 while reporting a loss of £18m. Initially, the firm explained this away as the result of new accounting practices demanded by the government. But the *Eye* understands that the firm sought other ways of filling the multi-million pound hole in its accounts.

Among these was the setting up of a subsidiary, appropriately called Treasurepark, half-owned by another company run by a businessman not entirely unknown to Brian Staples, Amey's chief executive. Because this arrangement was known as a JANE ("joint arrangement not an entity") Amey hoped to avoid losses on its Croydon Tramlink catastrophe, and at the same time even book some profits to close the £55m hole. Various other attempts at filling the hole, usually with the help of the chief executive's mate, were turned down by Grant Thornton.

But all this was to no avail. In October last year, Michael Kayser, appointed as finance director to try to unravel the mess at Amey, resigned as soon as he absorbed the full extent of the disaster in the accounts. Eric Tracey was then brought in from Deloitte Touche and insisted that £122m, an enormous sum for a firm of Amey's standing, should be written off. In the 2002 accounts these huge sums were described as "write-downs of construction work in progress balances and forward loss provisions for which previous optimism as to the recovery… has not been born out in practice."

This convenient sophistry did not disclose how far back the write-downs extended (the *Eye* understands at least five years); nor how Grant Thornton contrived not to notice them for all that time. But anyway the revelation of these huge write-downs did not impress the City. The share price slumped. Amey's chief executive Brian Staples left with the usual handsome pay-off (£361,036) and Amey was flogged off to Ferrovia of Spain.

Why did Ferrovia want to buy the wreck of Amey? The answer is simple: the huge share the company still has in the London tube, through its membership of the Tubelines consortium. The Spaniards licked their lips at the prospect of the cream to come from the privatised tube. In other words, when even the City and the stock exchange deserted Amey, the only support for the company came from the "new" Labour chancellor, Gordon Brown, the only person left in the country who still believes the London underground should be flogged off to companies such as Jarvis and Amey.

PS: Amey still retains two prestigious paid consultants from both sides of the political fence: Lady (Margaret) Jay, former Labour leader of the House of Lords; and Lord (John) Patten, former Tory secretary of state for education.

PPS: Brian Staples' business career continues. He is a non-executive director at IMI, and chairman of the audit committee there.

SEA SORE

THE UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) stands accused of "gross incompetence and maladminstration which has endangered the lives of successive crews" after a fishing vessel which was a potential death trap was rated safe to go to sea even after it had failed stability tests.

An Isle of Man politician is demanding that the Tynwald (the island's parliament) set up an inquiry into the MCA's granting of a safety certificate for the *Suzanna D*. John Rimmington, a member of the House of Keys, said he had been warned that making the matter public would cast a shadow over both the MCA and the island's shipping authorities, but added that the owners of the unusable boat deserved some means of redress.

The *Suzanna D* was bought in Portsmouth by Dante and Joan Spadoni for their Isle of Man-based fishing business in 1999. On payment of a fee, the IOM Marine Administration arranged for the MCA to oversee refurbishment of the vessel in the UK. Once the work was complete the IOM Marine Administration requested a rigorous "inclining test" in case alterations to the boat had altered its seaworthiness.

In fact the MCA carried out the much quicker and cheaper "roll test" which is not definitive in assessing if a boat is stable or not. The *Suzanna D* actually failed the roll test but was passed within the "margin for error" allowance and a safety certificate was issued. The boat was permitted to head for Manx waters. During the voyage the boat and her crew were nearly lost when it rolled in bad weather.

However, once the boat finally arrived in the Isle of Man, it was put to work as a fishing vessel. Several months later, in April 2000, the IOM Marine Administration remained concerned about the boat's stability and carried out its own tests at Port St Mary. Even the cheaper roll test showed "massive stability failure".

Further investigations into the boat's files, by independent experts, have revealed that all stability tests on the boat during the 1990s had shown it to be unstable, including the test for the 1997 safety certificate, issued by the MCA, on the basis of which Mr and Mrs Spadoni bought the *Suzanna D*.

Since then the boat has been impounded and is now berthed in Douglas, alongside the Solway Harvester which sank four years ago killing seven crew. The Spadonis are saddled with a large loan which they took out to buy the boat and no means of livelihood. The MCA has made small interim payments to the Spadonis but has spent months disputing the necessity for a full inclining test on the boat, before finally conceding to it. Watch this space.

EPIC TALE

A PENNY-PINCHING decision by the legal services commission (LSC), the body which dishes out legal aid to solicitors, has put hundreds of people living in care homes for the elderly at risk of untimely and unhappy deaths.

Thousands of council and privately-run homes in Britain have closed since 1997 because local councils are unable or unwilling to pay an economic rate for residents' care. When a home closes residents are moved, usually against their will, to unfamiliar new surroundings where they are separated from friends and familiar staff. This can be deeply traumatic. A study by the charity Elderly People in Crisis (Epic) found that residents of old folks' homes who were moved against their will were twice as likely to die in the following 12 months as oldies who could stay put.

Some elderly residents have tried to mount legal challenges to the closure of their homes, based on the risk to their lives and health under human rights legislation. Very few solicitors are interested in such cases, however – there's not much money in them. One firm which has successfully challenged such closures, however, is Hossacks, based in Kettering, Northants. It has now fought 81 cases on behalf of elderly residents all over Britain and has succeeded in keeping dozens of homes open.

One of Hossacks' clients, Clara Dudley, 87, petitioned Tony Blair in Downing Street on 9 June last year. Mrs Dudley was protesting at the proposed closure by East Sussex county council of her care home in Hastings and her enforced transfer to a private home in Bexhill. The following day Hossacks received a visit from the legal services commission.

The firm was told that human rights claims would no longer be funded "because of the cost to the government" and that if the firm was instructed by, say, 10 out of 40 residents in a home, the LSC would pay only 10 fortieths of its costs. The killer blow, however, was a ruling that the LSC would no longer pay any costs for Hossacks' time and travel outside the firm's "home" region of the east Midlands. Hossacks' solicitors spend a lot of time travelling because their elderly and infirm clients in other regions cannot come to them. Clients cannot simply find another local solicitor in Yellow Pages because most other law firms either aren't interested or do not have experience of such cases.

A judicial review of the decision provided a temporary reprieve for Hossacks, but last month the LSC reiterated its decision. The firm's principal, Yvonne Hossack, told the *Eye* that the firm's costs were now being met from her personal savings. She has already made one staff member redundant and has cut back the hours of the rest. The firm will not be able to continue in business beyond June 2004 unless the LSC changes its mind.

Yvonne Hossack

Mrs Hossack said: "People are being denied access to justice as they are unable to get the specialised help they require in order to progress their cases. Our work for the elderly and the disabled is clearly a threat to the government, in that it highlights the effects of their policies on vulnerable old people. It appears that our firm has been targeted, not for any sensible practical or financial consideration, but for political reasons."

Clara Dudley will not be making any more embarrassing visits to Downing Street in her wheelchair, anyway. Five days after being taken to see her new home in October, a visit which left her "very depressed" according to her daughter, Mrs Dudley suffered a severe stroke which robbed her of the power of speech.

BULLYING FINCH

WHATEVER happened to Christopher Finch (pictured right), the Gibraltar lawyer who played such an important part in the *Death on the Rock* controversy back in 1988?

As ancient *Eye* readers will recall, Finch represented Carmen Proetta, the witness who saw three unarmed members of the IRA being shot in the back by the SAS. In the eyes of British intelligence and the SAS at the time, Proetta became a hate figure.

The *Sunday Times* led a big smear campaign against her, landing the paper with hefty libel damages. The *Sunday Times* lawyers even approached a convicted drug dealer called Joe Wilkins in prison and gave him £3,000 for an unsigned (and on his later admission, wholly false) statement incriminating Proetta.

Although he was serving 10 years for drug-trafficking, Wilkins was downgraded to a category D prisoner and sent to an open prison from which he coolly absconded to Spain. Things got so hot for him there, however, he came back to Britain and gave himself up to police. Somehow his problems in Spain were sorted out and he was again downgraded to category D and again absconded, with eight years of his sentence still to be served.

Wilkins was a registered police informer and had strong connections to MI6 (see *Eye* 1086). He was supplied by the police with false travel documents and went back to Spain where he continued his drug-dealing and other criminal activities unscathed. Not long afterwards, his police handlers introduced him to two undercover officers from the Metropolitan police who had set themselves up in a bogus company looking for "business" in which they hoped to entrap drug dealers and other criminals.

Wilkins was instructed by the officers to "target" Gibraltar and, in particular, Christopher Finch. In a long and complicated "sting" operation, the police lured Finch to London in 1998 where he was arrested and charged, along with others, with various offences including drug dealing and money laundering. The main allegation concerned money passed through exchange bureaux with which Finch had no connection.

Finch spent several months in prison. The case at Southwark crown court dragged on and on as it became clearer to judge George Bathurst Norman that none of the alleged crimes could have been committed without the active encouragement of the police. The judge later condemned the operation as "state-created crime".

In 2000 Finch's lawyers argued that there was "no case to answer" and the judge agreed. But because he refused to "stay" the case, the prosecution was allowed to continue. The judge later admitted he had made a mistake. Finally, three years later still, in July 2003, the hugely long and expensive case was flung out by the judge, and all the defendants, including Christopher Finch, were discharged. Naturally the judgment was highly publicised, and the Met police operation heavily criticised, though not a single police officer was prosecuted or disciplined.

Christopher Finch's relief was shortlived. Sent a draft of the long and complicated judgment of judge Bathurst Norman, his lawyers were appalled to come across three passages in which Finch was said to have admitted laundering money from tobacco smuggling. He had made no such admissions and was never even charged with tobacco smuggling. His lawyers asked for the passages to be left out. The judge agreed; but when the final judgment appeared, one of the references was still there. "In this case" said the judge "on Mr Finch's own admission, in my view, he was involved in laundering money from tobacco smuggling."

A last-minute effort by Finch's lawyers to cut this passage out failed. The result was predictable. Finch, who had not been convicted of anything in court, was at once denounced in newspapers as a self-confessed smuggler. He had no case in libel, even if he could afford an action, since the allegation had been made in open court by a distinguished judge whose remarks are entirely protected by privilege.

After at least five years of prosecution and persecution by the police, Chris Finch had no easy way back to his job in Gibraltar and has been trying to scrape together a living with his family in Spain. On 21 November, the *Eye* wrote to judge Bathurst Norman:

"Finch makes the point – which seems a fair one – that the reference is very damaging to him... Considering that he walked from the court after a long case without any of the charges being proved, it does seem hard that he is said in your judgment to have made admissions he never made to crimes he never committed. I wonder if you have considered (or would now consider) making a public statement contradicting that statement. At any rate, I am asking you on the record whether that statement is correctly included in your judgment and, if so, how you justify it."

The judge replied promptly through his court manager to the effect a) that he had to include the one reference to Finch's tobacco-smuggling admissions because it was integral to his argument; b) that he had no intention of making a public statement exonerating Finch because he had referred the matter to the Bar Council; and c) that he was "surprised" we had not found out the history of the matter from Finch's lawyers.

The *Eye* duly wrote again to the judge on 5 December asking for clarification on the argument that the incriminating passage was an essential part of the judge's argument, and pointing out that the Bar Council tells us on the record that there has been no reference from the judge about Mr Finch or anything else.

Back came the reply: "It is wrong for me to debate a judgment which I have given in this way. I am not prepared to enter into further correspondence. Through the good offices of the crown the matter was referred to the Bar Council, and I understand the matter is being considered."

So Mr Finch, though found not guilty on all charges, is now smeared throughout the media, and is reluctant even to apply to continue his profession until the judge's error is formally corrected. He has not heard a word from the Bar Council and is specially intrigued by the judge's reference to the "good offices of the crown". He says: "The crown had spent 10 years and millions of pounds trying to condemn me, using false information and manufactured evidence. Where did the judge go to find these 'good offices'?"

TAPE WORMS

NO ONE had any doubt that 35-year-old Jane Brown was the victim of a violent rape. The awful event had been recorded on her child's tape recorder.

The police and crown prosecution service (CPS) rarely have such unequivocal evidence in a rape case and the trial of Jane's former partner for both rape and indecent assault was scheduled to take place at the Old Bailey.

In the event – and partly to spare her child the prospect of seeing his father jailed for a lengthy term – Jane (not her real name) agreed to a plea bargain that gave him a 12-month prison sentence in return for a plea of guilty to indecent assault. But after hearing the tape there was no doubt in anyone's mind – not the police, the CPS or Victim Support which arranged months of counselling for her – that she had been raped. The police had advised Jane to try to secretly tape any incident that might help her secure an injunction against her partner and the repeated and increasing violence she had been suffering at his hands.

Yet despite sending the tape to the criminal injuries compensation authority (CICA), it turned her down because of insufficient evidence. It was only when Women Against Rape took up her case that Jane finally won compensation. They represented her at an appeal and the panel listened to only a few minutes of the tape before deciding in her favour.

SACKING OFFENCE

ELMBRIDGE housing trust – an "Investor in People" – recently forced a housing warden out of her home and job after she had been living on site for 12 years successfully dealing with tenants and their problems.

Kathleen O'Donaghue, 60, was sacked after she had been off sick and the trust, one of Surrey's largest housing associations, claimed she had unreasonably refused to consent to a medical or to disclose her medical files.

In fact correspondence with the trust showed she *had* given consent for a doctor to see her records. However, because she did not want her personal medical history bandied around the association generally, she had delayed consent for those records to be disclosed to Elmbridge until it had identified the "designated officer" who would be responsible for considering them and keeping them confidential. Once that "officer" had been identified, she consented to her records and the doctor's opinion being disclosed.

Curiously Elmbridge refused to accept this consent and issued Ms O'Donaghue with a second form which only differed from the first in that it omitted the "designated officer" limitation – the very issue she had been concerned about. So she was now required to sign a form which meant everyone at Elmbridge would be able to read her records. When she refused, referring to her previous consent, the housing association sacked her. Incredibly, a south London employment tribunal found in favour of the housing trust.

Last month, however, an appeal tribunal declared the ruling "perverse". It was so shocked by the treatment of Ms Donaghue that it was persuaded by her barrister, Patrick Green, to take the unusual step of substituting its own finding of unfair dismissal rather than the usual course of forcing her to go through another hearing. Not only had the trust acted unreasonably, but it had failed to comply with any fair procedures, the tribunal said.

BAckhanders

REMEMBER the new "standing instruction" on bribery and corruption announced by British Airways earlier this year? The order doesn't yet seem to have reached all parts of the company.

In *Eye* 1086 we revealed the corruption scandal facing an African airline part-owned by BA. Not only does British Airways Associated Companies hold a one-tenth share in Air Mauritius, but BA's long-term leading legal counsel Robert Webb QC and BA's regional director for Africa, Alan Burnett, are both directors.

In 2001 the airline's chairman Harry Tirvengadum was arrested on suspicion of having embezzled £2.2m and was forced to resign. The firm's general finance manage Gerard Tyack is serving a three-year jail term for his part in the affair. During his trial details emerged of an illegal slush fund siphoned from company profits and used to fund political parties.

However, the standing instruction – part of BA's glossy corporate social responsibility package – was supposed to put a stop to any such behaviour. Let's take another look at it. "It is always unacceptable to promise, offer or accept bribes or other improper payments and favours which can include, for example gifts, entertainment, travel, and upgrades."

So it's interesting to find (in a recent feature about working abroad, in the *Guardian*'s jobs section) BA's commercial manager for West Africa, Shafiul Syed, explaining how: "In the UK, people have a clear business objective. Here there's a business objective, a personal and administrative objective and then there's got to be something in it for the government. Backhanders still play a part in business, although it's more veiled than it used to be."

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

BRITISH investigators from the Serious Farce Office and the financial services authority (FSA) are expected to be asked to assist the Italian and American investigations into the £7bn Parmalat fraud. Requests under the neutral legal assistance agreements that exist between the UK, the US and Italy which are overseen and actioned by the SFO are likely because of the roles of certain Parmalat companies in the UK and the position as UK directors of three of those already detained by Italian prosecutors.

Parmalat, one of Italy's largest companies, is best known in Britain for its Loseley dairy products. The Italian food group has two main UK subsidiaries: Parmalat Food Holdings and Parmalat Food Imports UK. There is also another interesting British company, Valuetrading.

The three directors include two key associates of Parmalat's founder and pillager Calisto Tanzi: finance director Fausto Tonna and outside lawyer Gian Paulo Zini.

Tonna has admitted helping Tanzi to inflate the Parmalat accounts for several years, hiding losses and debts while Tanzi helped himself to more than £500m. Zini is accused by Tonna and others of creating the complex offshore structures that enabled Tanzi to mastermind probably the world's biggest ever financial illusion. Zini denies any part in the fraud that Tanzi and Tonna admit.

The third UK director, Claudio Pessina, was a senior Parmalat executive who was arrested with Zini after Christmas when the method and scale of the fraud became clear.

Tonna, with Pessina, was a director of Parmalat Food Holdings which controls the group's dairy interests in the UK, plus a stake in Brazil which is one of the areas where it appears ever-growing losses caused the need for the fraud. A year ago the company's assets were valued at £138m. How much of that is represented by the 20 percent of Parmalat Brazil is unclear. But £58m was rather unusually generated last year by the buying back of shares in group companies.

Tonna and Zini were directors of Parmalat Food Imports, one of the PFH subsidiaries. This company began trading in 2000, importing from Parmalat companies in Italy. Questions may be asked about whether any of these contracts were like the deal to sell milk to Cuba which, if real, would have covered the entire island an attractive shade of white.

Pessina was a director of Valuetrading whose main asset (value at £163m) was in Dairies Holding International in the Netherlands – clearly a tax-driven structure. Valuetrading's other business, whatever that was, was carried out in Luxembourg, another tax haven, although the company was registered in Britain.

The valuations placed on these assets are likely to be under the microscope, causing potential embarrassment to Parmalat's UK auditors Deloitte & Touche. The ability of Tanzi and Tonna for more than five years to create a financial fantasy owed much to the fact that so much of the Parmalat business was audited by Grant Thornton, although the parent company's auditor was Deloitte & Touche. D&T relied heavily on the work done by Grant Thornton who did all the audits until Italian law required a rotation of auditors in 1999. But Grant Thornton still kept the audits for many of the subsidiaries and all the key offshore companies, in particular the Cayman Islands dustbin Bonlat, where all the bodies were buried.

Questions are likely to be asked about why D&T failed to spot any holes in the Parmalat accounts for four years. They, of course, will point to Grant Thornton two of whose Italian partners have already been detained.

But, as the case of Polly Peck more than a decade ago proves (Stoy Hayward relied on numbers provided by a Turkish Cypriot firm in Azil Nadir's pocket), reliance by one auditor on work done by another is always problematic when international activities are involved and all the key companies are not overseen by the main auditor.

IRONICALLY, the trial of those accused of another but much smaller financial fantasy – trade finance fraud Versailles – is due to start later this month.

Chairman Carl Cushnie denies any knowledge of false invoices and inflated profits. He is expected to blame finance director Frederick Clough whose response is awaited with interest. Versailles will be a key test for the SFO after its failure to obtain convictions in a similar false accounting case involving the DIY group Wickes. Should it fail to obtain convictions then questions are likely to be asked about whether it was such a good idea to let the long-time case controller depart for Iraq last year to help establish a new judicial system post-occupation.

ELSEWHERE in the world of bad bean-counters, it appears that those in charge of clearing up the Arthur Andersen mess in Britain – Deloitte & Touche took over the Andersen business here – have thrown in the towel over Andersen's role at Wickes.

The accounts for three years in the 1990s were inflated by a conspiracy between company executives and certain suppliers. The bean counters' regulator, the joint disciplinary scheme (JDS), has brought charges against Andersen and two of its former partners. However, it is understood that as far as Andersen is concerned, these charges will no longer be resisted and the judgment of a failure to perform a correct audit will be accepted from the JDS.

This decision has been taken although there is money available to deal with the Andersen legacy. Clearly, those in charge of the purse strings consider Wickes a lost cause. What that means for the two partners other than that they are on their own remains to be seen.

FILM-GOERS will be amused to see Mohamed Fayed credited as an executive producer of the latest film version of *Peter Pan*.

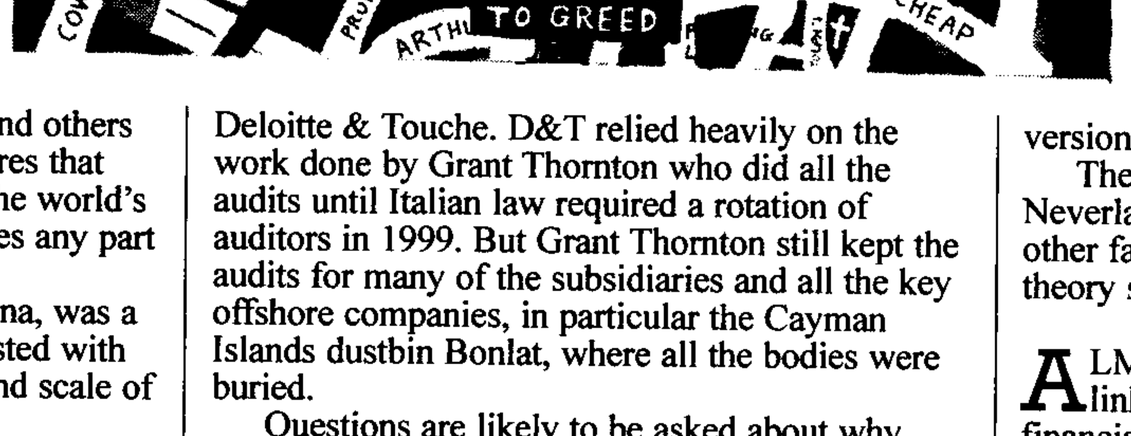
The phoney pharaoh, after all, is no stranger to Neverland when it comes to financial or many other facts. He is also, as the Diana conspiracy theory shows, still at 74 a believer in fairy tales.

ALMOST a year ago the *Eye* highlighted the links between authorised share-dealer and financial adviser Merton Securities and Russian organised crime, as well as several other dubious individuals and transactions.

The financial services authority (FSA) had for some time been looking for a reason to strip Merton's authorisation. Well, it finally got there last September. The FSA withdrew Merton's authorisation on the basis not that it had bad clients but inadequate resources. Better late than not at all… but what took the regulator so long?

NIGERIAN fraudsters are nothing if not up with the news when it comes to redistributing other people's wealth. Their latest email trick to separate the greedy and gullible from their money relies on the capture last month of Saddam Hussein.

A Major Kimball Marshall, who claims to have captured the great dictator in his Tikrit bunker, wants help to liberate the $12.5m in hundred dollar bills which he claims to have also removed from the bunker. The money, we are told, is now in a safe deposit box in Amsterdam, having been



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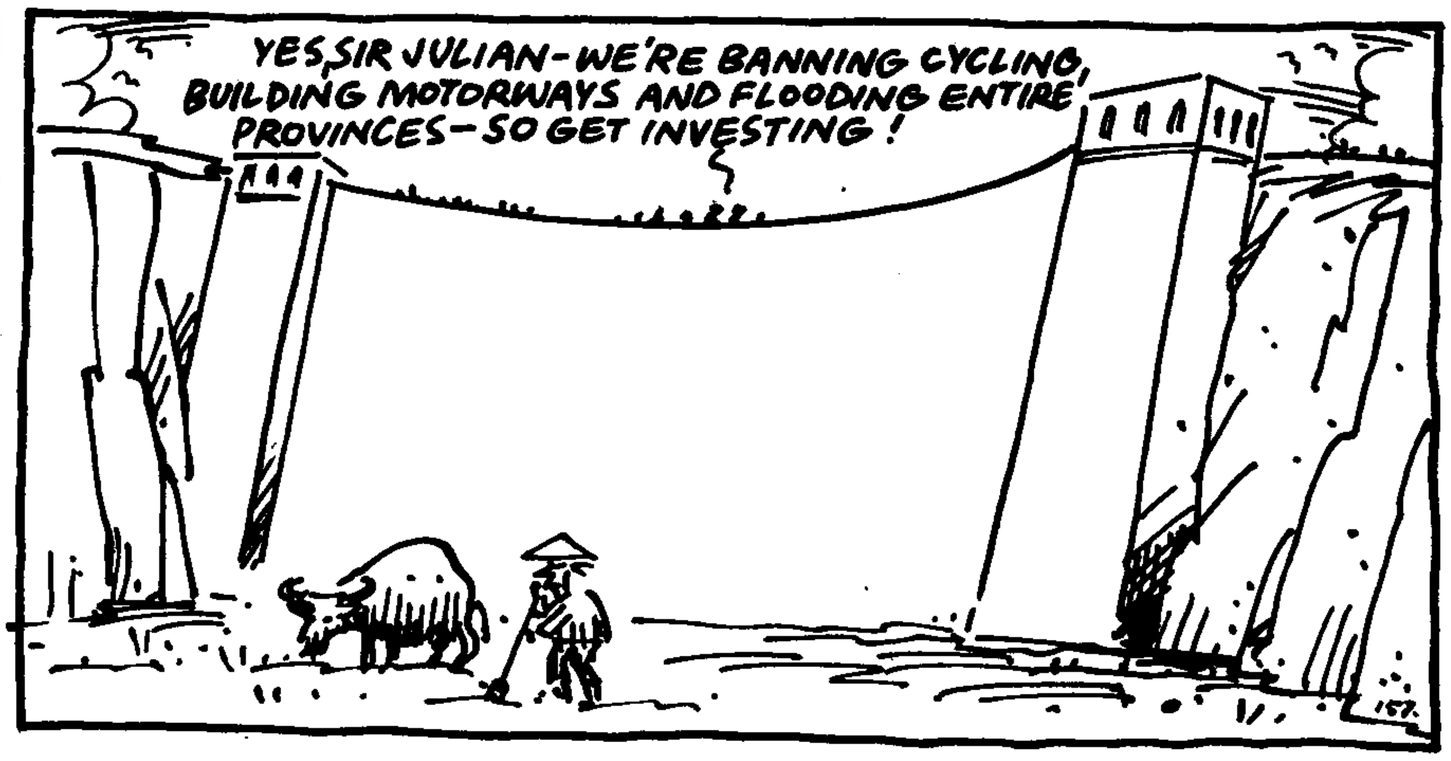

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**Halliburton, run by Cheney before he ran for vice-president, has done so well from contracts to rebuild Iraq it faces a probe on its charges*

flown there from Saudi Arabia. All the brave major wants is our help to claim all this money via someone else's bank account as he is still a serving soldier.

For now that merely requires your passport details. No doubt your bank details will be required later. Any of this information, once provided, will give the major and his friends far more pleasure than in fact those who hand them over are likely to receive from the entirely fictional Saddam loot.

THIS YEAR's awards from the Gnome Institute for Greed Management. Crook of the Year: a late winner here, Calisto Tanzi of Parmalat, who has admitted to creating the biggest ever, longest lasting financial fantasy.

Newcomer of the Year: but for events in Italy, Conrad Black was a shoo-in for the coveted Crook award thanks to his diverting of millions of other people's dollars from Hollinger to pay himself and his associates. Sadly, he was pipped at the post but still justifies the lesser award.

Comeback of the Year: this was the once-again threatened return to Britain of Polly Peck conman Asil Nadir. Three months in and he is still sitting in his Northern Cyprus haven. Whether he will make it back to Britain to face trial before the end of 2004 remains a big question.

Escaper of the Year: Charles Allen of Granada who should have walked the ITV plank with Carlton's Michael Green, but pushed his partner overboard first. Whether Allen will survive 2004 is a moot point given the hostility towards him of the Granada and Carlton institutional shareholders.

Suits of the Year: all those directors and fund managers at Invesco and the other mutual fund companies who have for years been ripping off investors while getting fat on the fees generated by late traders and market timers.

'Slicker'

● *See Amey: Down the Tube, p. 26*

O·B·N

Sir, You describe Gordon Brown as the "Aluminium Chancellor" (leading article, December 11). An appropriate description of one who is strong yet flexible, optimistic, promoting science and research and even pushing for deregulation within the EU.

Like aluminium, Mr Brown will also prove to be fully recyclable, without any loss in quality, perhaps into an even higher position.

Letter from the Secretary-General of the Aluminium Federation
The Times

Submitted by V. Stuart

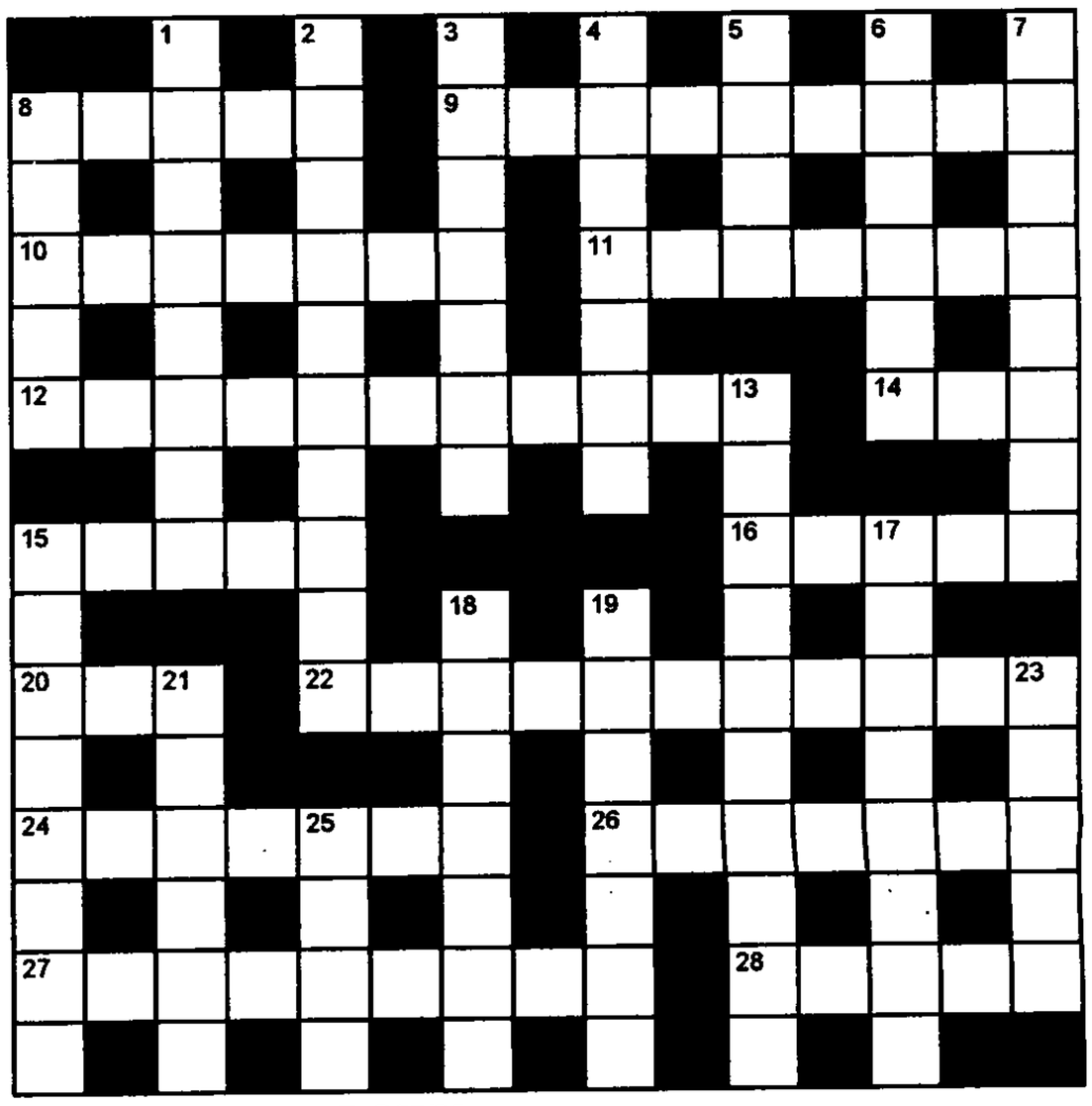
£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

EYE CROSSWORD 252

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 16 January 2004.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

8 After Bush's third quarter, a one-sided call for independence of the nation (5)
9 Pervy MacShanty, tacky sort of sailor? (9)
10/15dn/25 Blair and Bush say they enjoy this peculiar sort of sex – "cool" (7,12)
11 See 20
12 Blair's outfit – much work to do! (6,5)
14 See 22
15 Brilliant, ditching Blair's number one – true? (5)
16 Not one nude wrestler's nob twisted (5)
20/11 City in defeat: Gormley's huge erection, unlocated, requires stimulant (3,7)
22/14 American bird, mounted, we hear, is brought down to earth without resistance (5,6,3)
24 Lynne gets her employer fitted with a surgical appliance (7)
26 Rev Blair's heart is entwined with US's PC attackers (7)
27 How not to demand a flasher's confession? (3,4,2)
28 Nuts, in a U-turn kind of way? (5)

DOWN

1 Copper Mike, hidden, causing strain that's hard to eradicate (8)
2 Metalworker grabs one pair of tits to delay parliamentary business (10)
3 Me city centre's abandoned – Conservative cuts? (7)
4 Amphetamines covering what sounds like short cake (7)
5 "Horny beast" dealer who's in and out quickly (4)
6 One looking happy, getting head from sexual athlete (6)
7 Perhaps just the right screwing, indeed so (3-5)
8 Family member mounts one – end of moral fibre (5)
13 Cyclops craftily deviates, it's said – no word of a lie (5,5)
15 See 10 Across
17 A familiar Bush unlikely to speak of "vulnerability"? (4,4)
18 *Party Party* backing has funny whatsits (7)
19 Retch and turn over – "Stop the boat!" (5,2)
21 Runs south and gives up (6)
23 Fetching up I'd have a shot (5)
25 See 10 Across

Crossword 251 winner: BILL GOODGE

ACROSS: 14 Psst 15 Wistful 16 Leprosy 17 Stiffy 18 Pensioning off 22 Idyll 23 Cliche 27 Upbringing 29 Tsunami 30 Maniac 31 H-bomb 32 Fringe 35 Coffin-nail 37 Totem 38 Psychopath 40 Stalag 42 Loins 43 Arouse 46 Do porridge 48 Skedaddle 49 Firsts 54 Smallish 56 Splice the main brace 61 Arse 62 Stellar 63 Interviewer 64 Limply.

DOWN: 1 Jet-ski 2 Buttress 3 Blow me 4 Stuffing 5 Armlet 6 Goblet 7 Tripartite 8 Recovery 9 Agassi 10 Infighting 11 In a flash 12 Insensible 13 Boys will be boys 19 Exams 20 Oarsman 21 Fiftieths 23 Cliff 24 Prick-teaser 25 Handful 26 Trail bike 27 Unopposed 28 Night 31 Homeopath 33 In power 34 Called to the bar 36 Outdo 39 Heedful 41 Gored 44 Extra 45 Benefactor 47 Open letter 48 Steel plate 50 Humanism 51 Tasmania 52 The Crown 53 Yard-arms 55 Ideals 57 Castro 58 Tiffin 59 Nipple 60 Castle.

"Sexual intercourse began / In Nineteen-sixty-three / (Which was rather late for me) - / Between the end of the Chatterley ban / And the Beatles' first LP." First verse of 'Annus Mirabilis' by Philip Larkin (published by Faber and Faber Ltd.)

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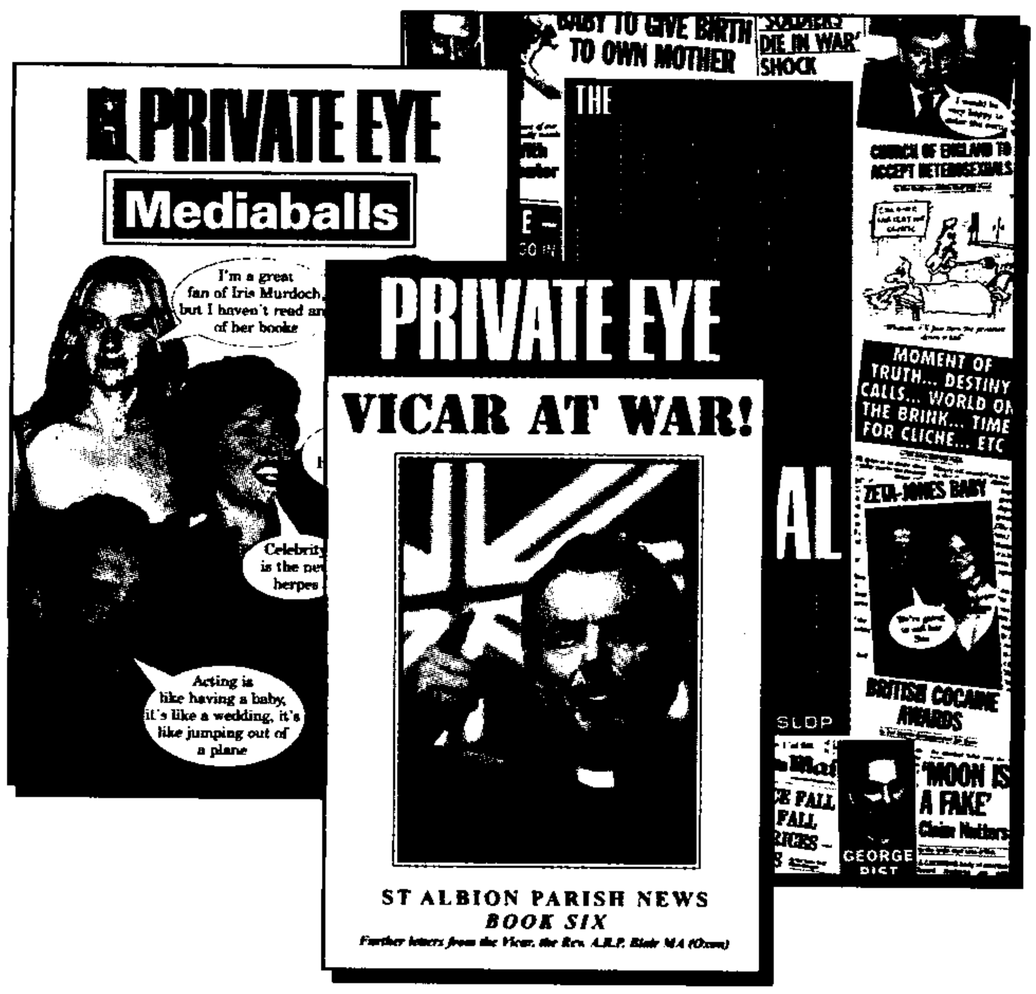
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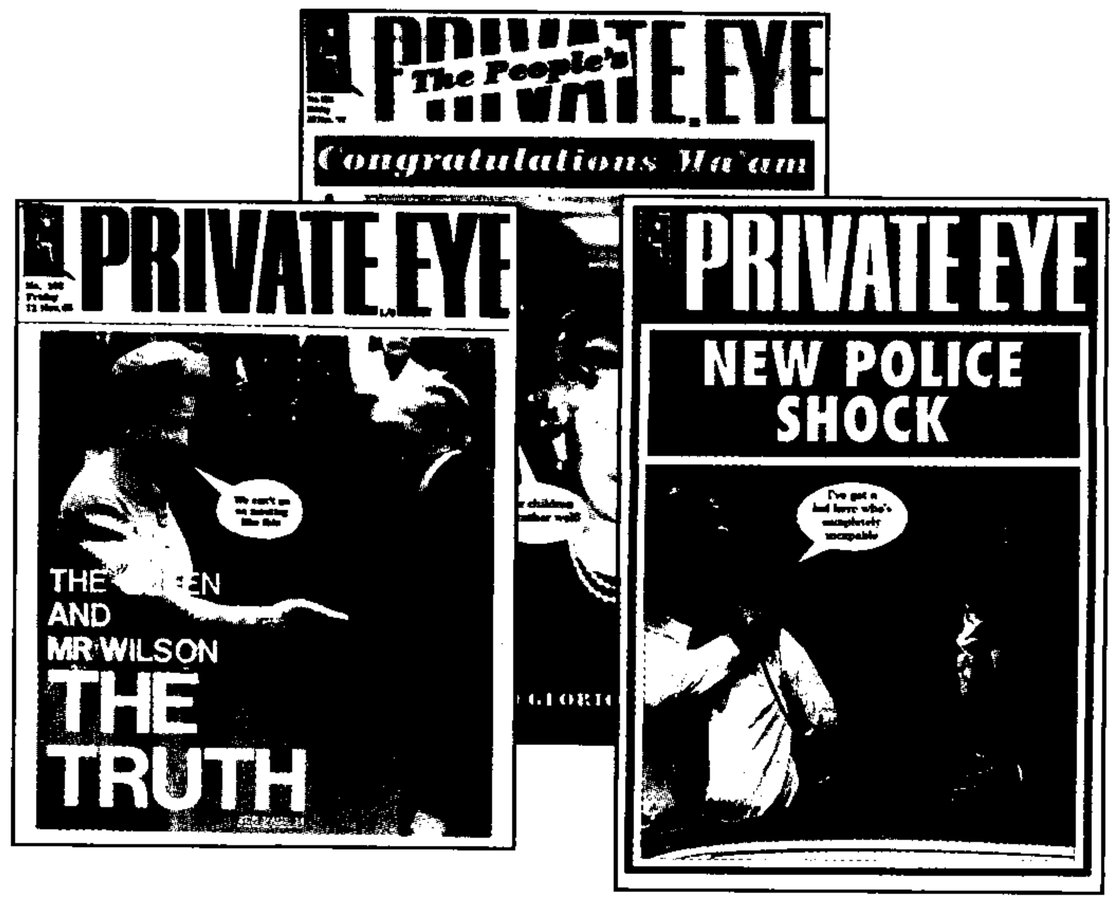

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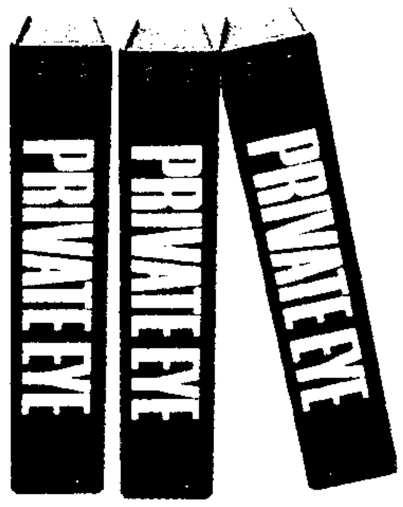

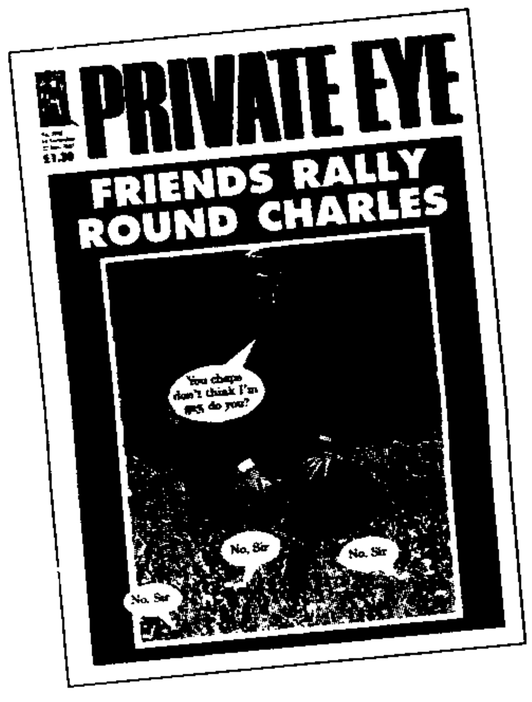

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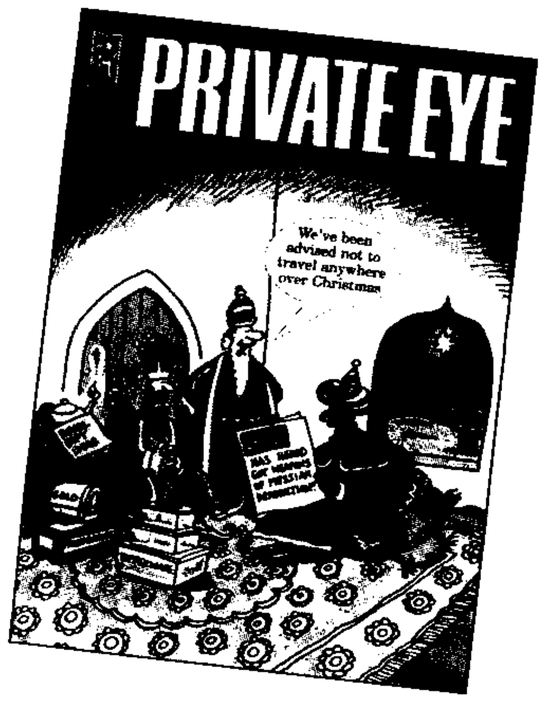

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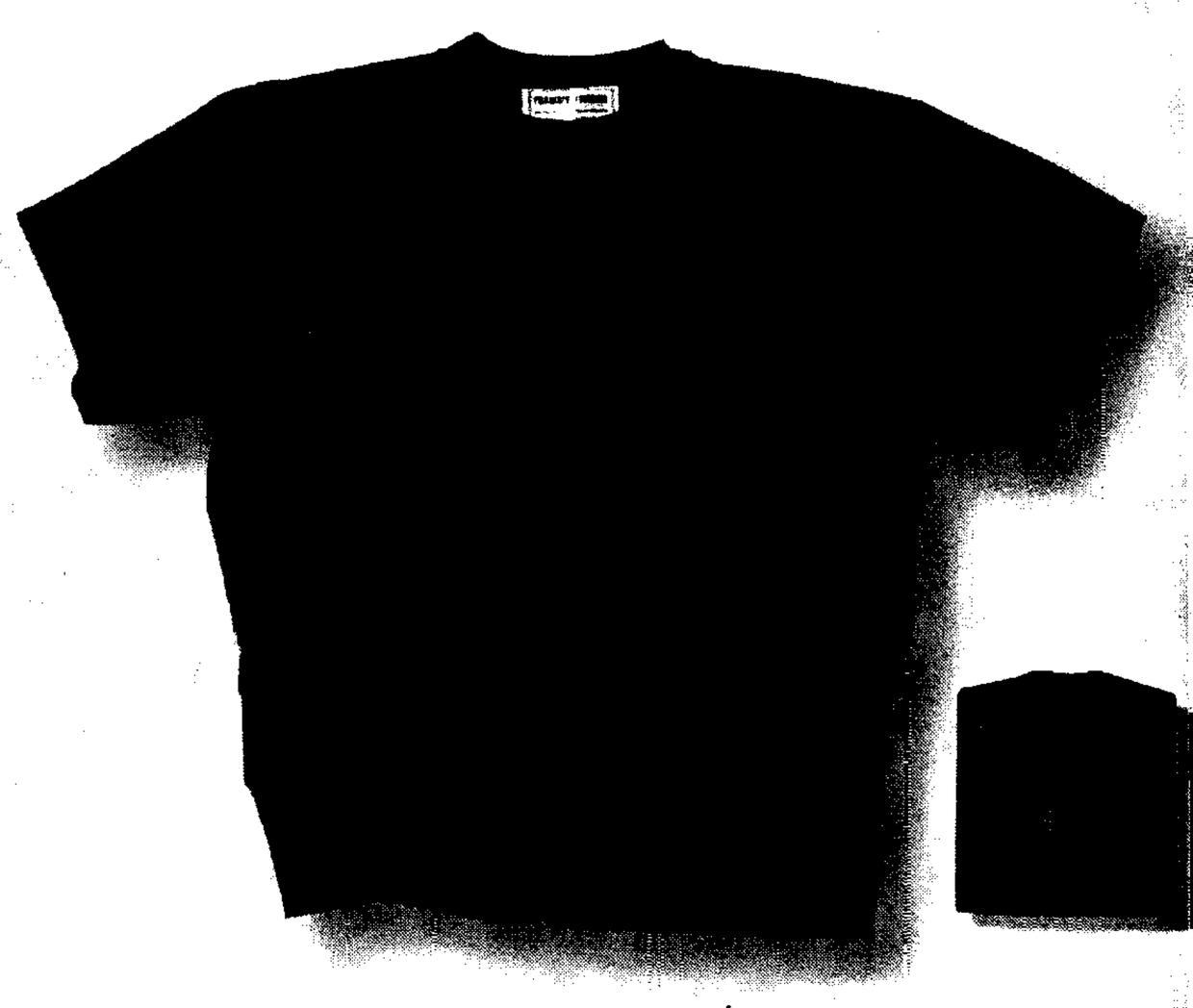

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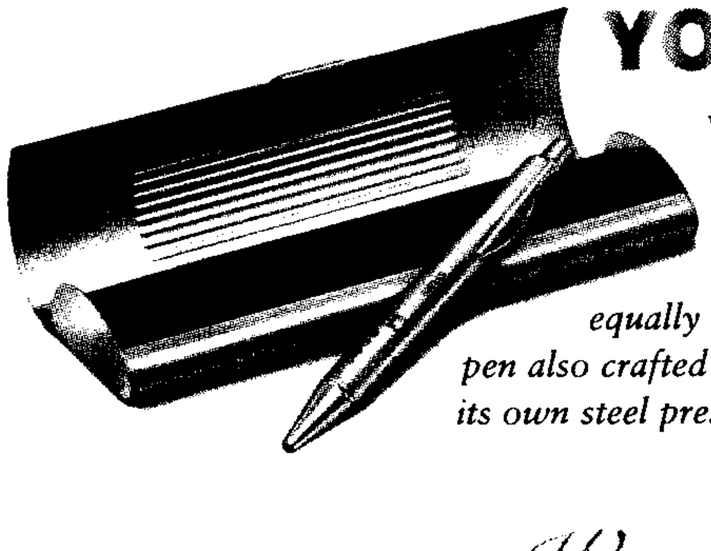

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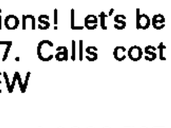

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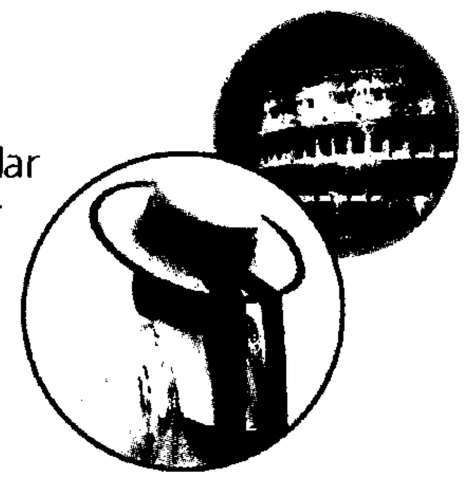

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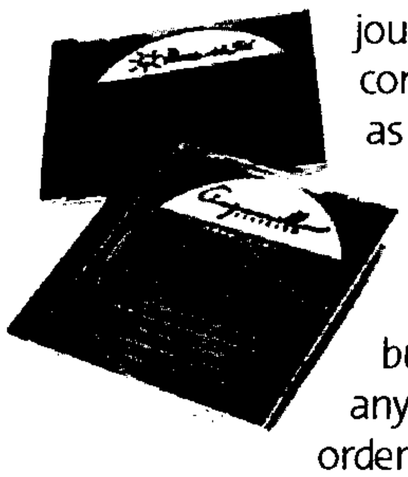

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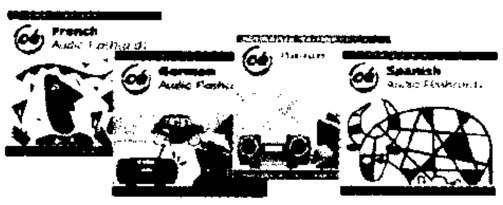

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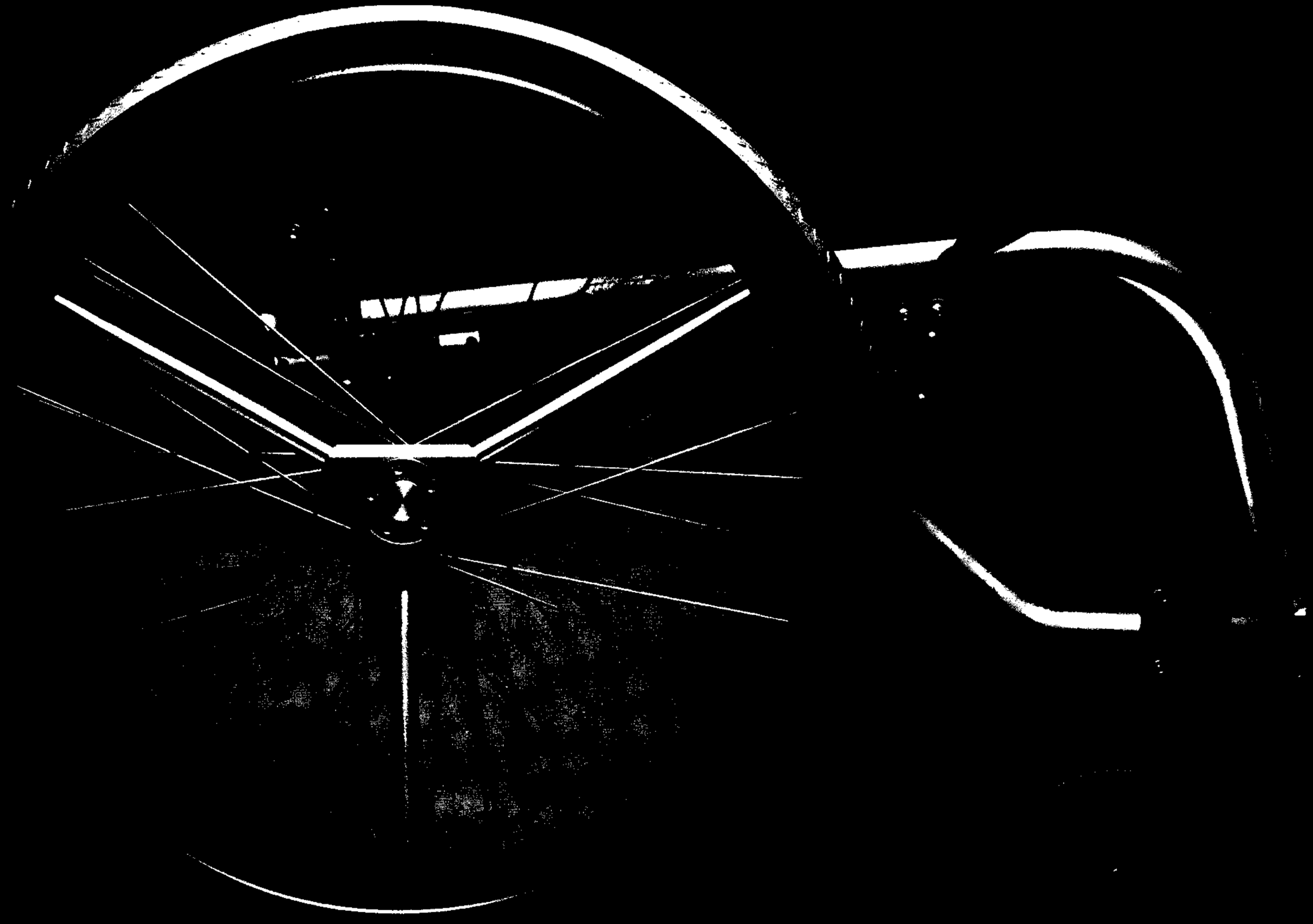

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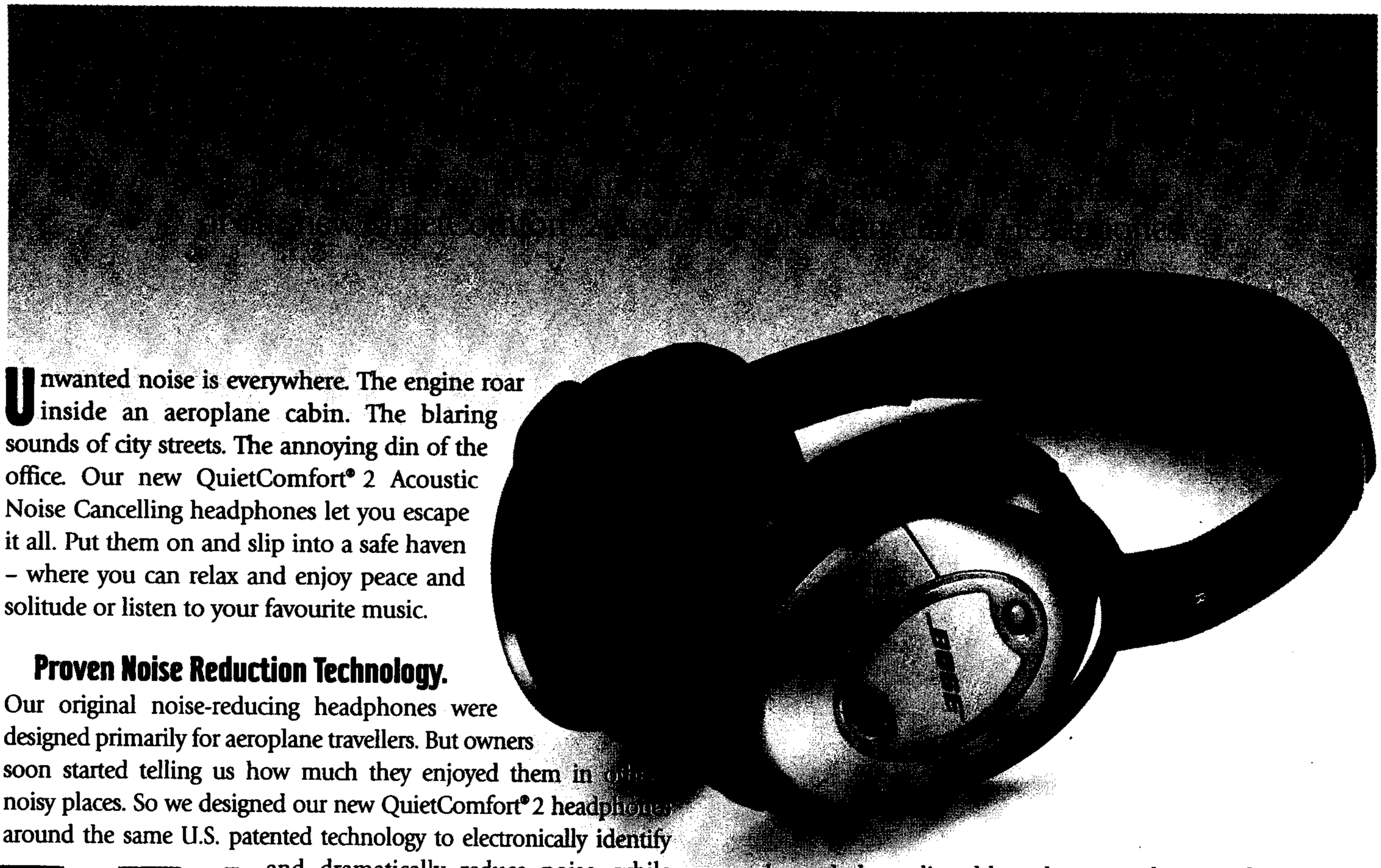

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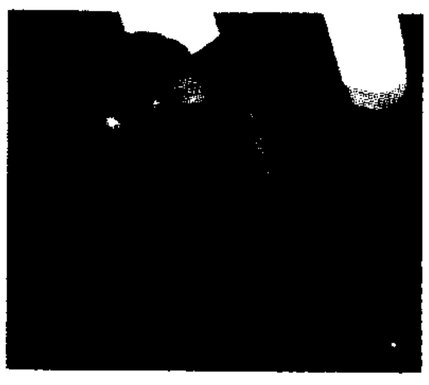

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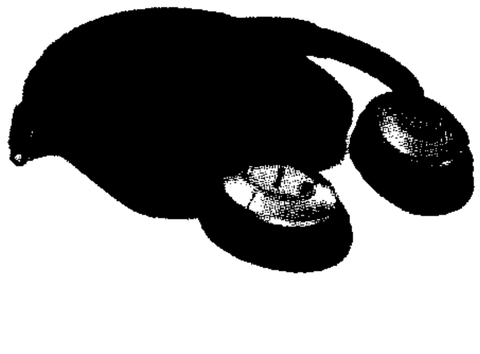

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